Booklist

Leading book discovery

Vol. 119 No. 17
5/1/23

Spotlight on
Mysteries & Thrillers

Focus on
True Crime

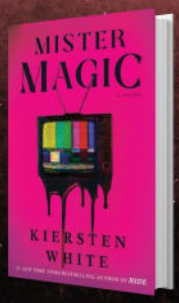
Cover art from *Murder under a Red Moon*, by Harini Nagendra

ALA American Library Association

VISIT…

KILLER READS

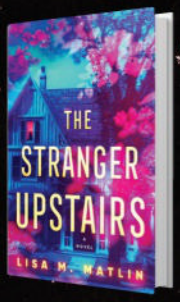
FOR **SUMMER & FALL**



Kiersten White
MISTER MAGIC:
A NOVEL

Who is Mister Magic? Former child stars reunite to uncover the tragedy that ended their show—and discover the secret of its enigmatic host—in this dark supernatural thriller from the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Hide*.

978-0-593-35926-6 | $28.00/$37.99C
85,000 | Del Rey | HC | August
E 978-0-593-35927-3
🎧 978-0-593-60692-6



Lisa M. Matlin
THE STRANGER UPSTAIRS:
A NOVEL

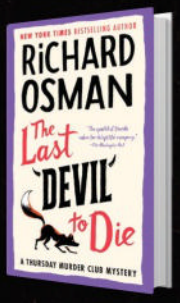
Most people wouldn't buy an infamous murder house to renovate for fun. But Sarah Slade is not most people.

978-0-593-59995-2 | $28.00/$37.99C
35,000 | Bantam | September
E 978-0-593-59996-9 🎧 978-0-593-74309-6

Laura Sims
HOW CAN I HELP YOU

From the author of *Looker* comes this "compulsive and unforgettable novel" (Mona Awad) of razor-sharp suspense about two local librarians whose lives become dangerously intertwined.

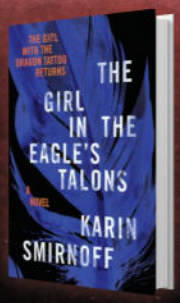
978-0-593-54370-2 | $27.00/$37.00C
50,000 | Putnam | HC | July
E 978-0-593-54372-6 🎧 978-0-593-74192-4



Richard Osman
THE LAST DEVIL TO DIE

A new mystery is afoot in the fourth book in the Thursday Murder Club series. You'd think you be allowed to relax over Christmas, but not in the world of the Thursday Murder Club.

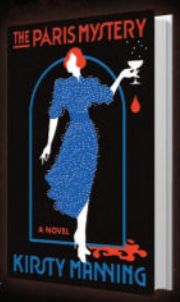
978-0-593-29942-5 | $28.00/$37.99C
150,000 | Pamela Dorman Books | HC | September
E 978-0-593-29943-2 🎧 978-0-593-78958-2
LP 978-0-593-79265-0



Karin Smirnoff;
Translated by Sarah Death
THE GIRL IN THE EAGLE'S TALONS:
A LISBETH SALANDER NOVEL

A pulse-pounding thriller, *The Girl in the Eagle's Talons* sees Salander and Blomkvist navigating a world of conspiracy and betrayal, old enemies and new friends, ice-bound wilderness and the global corporations that threaten to tear it apart.

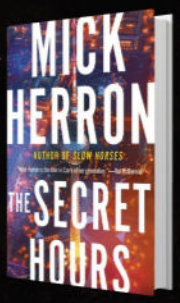
978-0-593-53669-8 | $29.00
150,000 | Knopf | HC | August
E 978-0-593-53670-4 🎧 978-0-593-74654-7
CD 978-0-593-74652-3 LP 978-0-593-74891-6



Kirsty Manning
THE PARIS MYSTERY:
A NOVEL

Intrepid reporter Charlotte "Charlie" James arrives in Paris in 1938 eager to make a fresh start, but little does she know the trouble that awaits her...

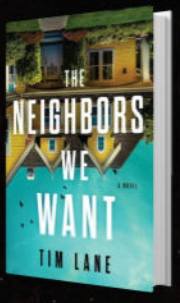
978-0-593-68554-9 | $17.00/$23.00C
40,000 | Vintage | TR | August
E 978-0-593-68555-6 🎧 978-0-593-74410-9



Mick Herron
THE SECRET HOURS

A gripping standalone spy thriller from the #1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *Slow Horses*, with a riveting reveal about a disastrous MI5 mission in Cold War Berlin—an absolute must-read for *Slough House* fans.

978-1-641-29521-5 | $27.95/$36.95C
100,000 | Soho Press | HC | September
E 978-1-64129-522-2



Tim Lane
THE NEIGHBORS WE WANT

This psychological page-turner, perfect for fans of Paula Hawkins and Gillian Flynn, explores how far couples will go to keep their marriage intact—unless their secrets tear it apart first.

978-1-63910-473-4 | $29.99/ $38.99C
30,000 | Crooked Lane Books | HC | September
E 978-1-63910-474-1

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Booklist

May 1, 2023
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Letter from the Editor / George Kendall

The American Library Association and Booklist Publications are deeply saddened to share the news of the death of Bill Ott on April 8th, 2023, after a brief illness. Bill brought a deep love of books, expertise in librarianship, editorial creativity, and conviction to his work with both Booklist Publications and ALA during his 39 years on the *Booklist* staff, 30 of them at the helm. Please find more information about Bill's remarkable career in a press release issued April 11 (ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/04/ala-remembers-bill-ott-1947-2023-booklist-editor-and-publisher).

When I began as Editor & Publisher in June 2019, I wrote the following in my first editorial published in the July 2019 issue:

"I recently finished *Grit* by psychologist Angela Duckworth. 'Grit,' Duckworth writes, 'is about working on something you care about so much that you're willing to stay loyal to it . . . it's doing what you love, but not just falling in love—*staying* in love.' According to Duckworth—and I'm sure everyone who works with him—Bill has grit. Fortunately, for *Booklist*, Bill continues to edit, write, and work closely with the team."

All of us at *Booklist* and ALA are forever grateful for Bill's leadership, passion, counsel, and friendship. Our thoughts are with his loving family.

As you read this issue, which features our annual spotlight on mysteries & thrillers, Bill's expertise shines and we dedicate the issue to Bill and his family. No one was more devoted to crime fiction, no one more skilled at unraveling themes in this genre, than Bill. His passing is a devastating loss, but his legacy lives on in all that we do. Bill's drive, dedication, and grit will continue to inspire and motivate the *Booklist* team and we are proud to have worked with him, to have learned from him, and we will continue to follow on his path of innovation, positively influenced by Bill in so many ways, all reflected in the pages of *Booklist*, a publication Bill transformed and elevated during his time with us.

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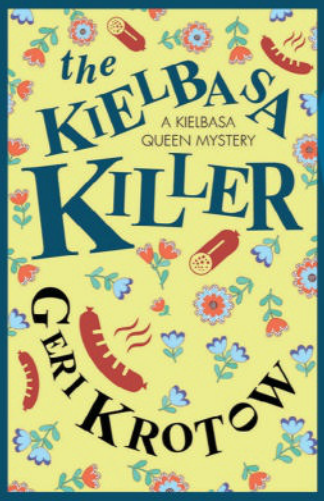
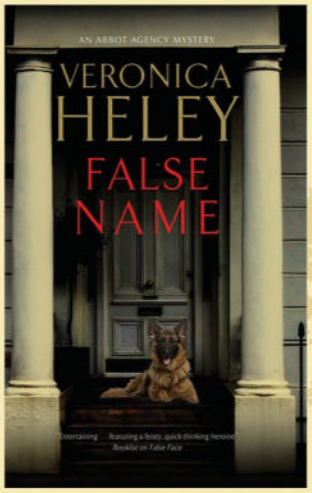


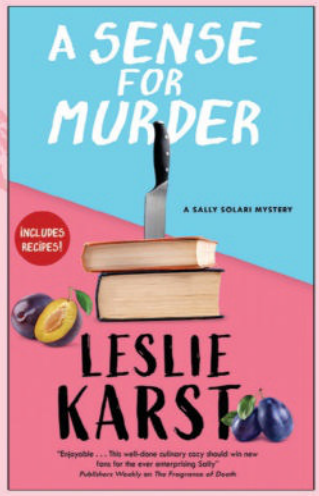
July 4, 2023 | 9781448311187 | HC | $31.99
A delectable new culinary cozy series set in 1980s New York with a Polish-American twist



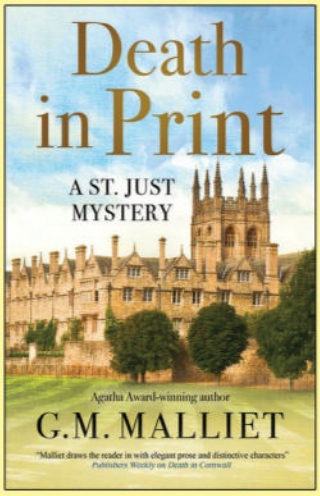
July 4, 2023 | 9781448311163 | HC | $31.99
"An entertaining British cozy featuring a feisty, quick-thinking heroine"
Booklist on *False Face*

LET'S GET COZY!

PAGE-TURNING COZY MYSTERIES FROM SEVERN HOUSE



August 1, 2023 | 9781448309054 | HC | $31.99
"This tale will have readers of Rita Mae Brown and Darci Hannah dining out on a delicious mystery"
Booklist on *Murder from Scratch*



August 1, 2023 | 9781448311200 | HC | $31.99
"The reader who hasn't yet discovered Malliet's St. Just mystery series has a real treat in store"
Booklist Starred Review of *Death at the Alma Mater*

SEVERN HOUSE

Distributed by Publishers Group West

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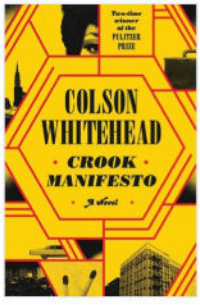

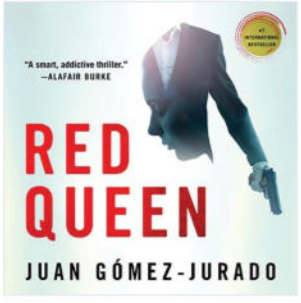

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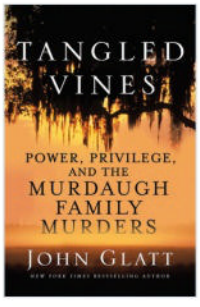

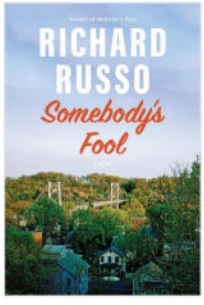

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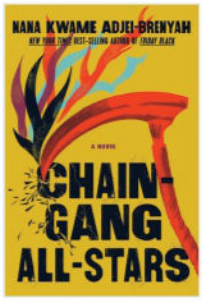

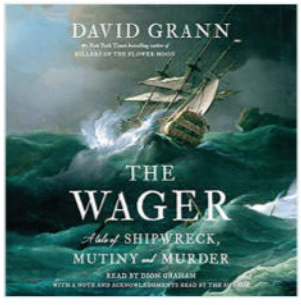

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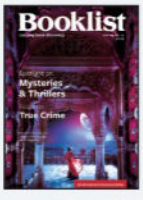

On the Cover
From *Murder under a Red Moon,* by Harini Nagendra, which received a starred review in *Booklist*'s February 15, 2023, issue and now appears in Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers, p.28. Cover design by Faceout Studio, Molly von Borstel. Imagery by Shutterstock. Used by permission of Pegasus Books.

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Philosophy & Psychology

Body Neutral: A Revolutionary Guide to Overcoming Body Image Issues.

By Jessi Kneeland.

June 2023. 432p. Penguin Life, paper, $20 (9780593491768); e-book (9780593491751). 155.2.

Many of us have love/hate relationships with our bodies. Former personal trainer and current life coach Kneeland, who identifies as queer and nonbinary, spent years trying to help clients make the changes they felt they needed to like their bodies. But something was still missing. With body neutrality, the emphasis is shifted away from the physical body. Instead, practitioners search for the underlying unmet needs and unresolved psychological issues that underlie their unhappiness with their bodies. Kneeland identifies four avatars or symbolic representations to promote healing. "The Self-Objectifier" focuses on gaining power, "The High Achiever" focuses on proving personal worth, "The Outsider" focuses on fitting in, and "The Runner" focuses on surviving. A self-assessment test helps readers zero in on the appropriate avatar, and the chapters that follow detail characteristics, explore a client's case as a guiding example, develop a blueprint for recovery, and set action steps. There's a lot here for readers who are serious about coming to terms with their body image and willing to do the work to make it happen. —*Candace Smith*

YA/S: *Teens dealing with these issues will be guided by this exploration. CS.*

Power of Saying No: The New Science of How to Say No that Puts You in Charge of Your Life.

By Vanessa Patrick.

June 2023. 336p. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (9781728251523). 158.1.

Why do we so often say "yes" when we really mean "no?" Patrick, a marketing professor at the University of Houston, has spent years researching that question. By analyzing data from interviews, surveys, and test cases, the author has discovered two driving forces: the desire to be seen as warm and as competent. Both factor into our tendency to give in, even when we're not convinced it's for the right reasons. Patrick says the solution is the "empowered refusal." This allows us to consider our values while conveying determination and discouraging pushback. With a series of brief tests, Patrick helps readers understand their typical reactions to requests and the history behind them. Instead of imposing a blueprint on this process, the author encourages readers to create their own personal policies, i.e., a simple set of rules that reflect their values and priorities. These policies will enable them to evaluate requests and make firm, empowered choices. Filled with personal anecdotes, case studies, and quotes from literature, this persuasive book will set readers on the path to self-awareness and empowerment. —*Candace Smith*

Your Future Self: How to Make Tomorrow Better Today.

By Hal Hershfield.

June 2023. 304p. Little, Brown/Spark, $29 (9780316421256). 158.1.

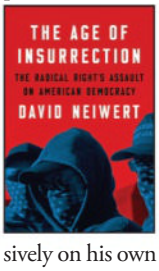
We all dabble in "mental time travel," according to Hershfield, a professor of philosophy at UCLA. We remember our lives as children or young adults; we imagine our futures. Hershfield has used MRIs, surveys, and interviews with numerous students and others to determine just how we feel about our future selves and how that affects our current lives. In cases where subjects felt strongly connected to their future selves, they seemed to be more inclined to live a healthier and more frugal lifestyle. Those who viewed their future selves as "strangers" were more apt to live for today. Hershfield suggests various ways to look forward, including using computer programs to age our pictures and writing letters to our future selves. He explains that procrastination is actually assuming (usually without merit) that our future selves will have more time or be more willing to take on unpleasant tasks. Hershfield ultimately offers strategies for pushing our current selves to advance, while keeping our future selves in mind. —*Candace Smith*

Social Sciences

The Age of Insurrection: The Radical Right's Assault on American Democracy.

By David Neiwert.

June 2023. 448p. Melville, $39.99 (9781685890360). 320.



"The January 6 insurrection was an attack on the hallmark of American democracy: the peaceful transfer of power," writes journalist Neiwert (*Red Pill, Blue Pill*, 2020). Now in his fifth decade of reporting on right-wing extremism in the U.S., this expert on authoritarianism warns that the taste of power will propel extremists to continue their assault on democracy. Drawing extensively on his own investigations for the Southern Poverty Law Center and numerous publications, Neiwert catalogs the myriad groups and operatives of the self-proclaimed patriot movement, fully examining the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, deranged QAnon believers, and many others. In this comprehensive look at what makes these far-right extremists tick, the author delves into their actions and plans and digs deep into the psychology of authoritarianism. From street brawlers to conservative media, conspiracy theorists, and the GOP, Neiwert considers the violent rhetoric of eliminationism employed by the radical right and tracks the many aspects of the sustained offensive against democracy, inclusion, and the rule of law. Well-written, impeccably researched, easy to digest, and vivid in its profiles of far-right radicals, *The Age of Insurrection* is a key source for readers trying to make sense of it all. —*James Pekoll*

Girls and Their Monsters: The Genain Quadruplets and the Making of Madness in America.

By Audrey Clare Farley.

June 2023. 304p. Grand Central, $29 (9781538724477); e-book (9781538724491). 306.8750.

Farley (*The Unfit Heiress*, 2021) recounts the sad story of the Genain quadruplets in a narrative that amply draws on published documents and new interviews to illuminate elusive truths within family chaos. Born in 1930, Edna, Wilma, Sarah, and Helen Genain had parents who were not only woefully unprepared to handle them but who were also engaged in appalling and abusive behaviors that resulted in various degrees of trauma for their daughters, including being abused by others, as well. Eventually, all four girls were diagnosed with schizophrenia, which led to years of sometimes troubling psychiatric treatment. Farley spoke to the last surviving sibling as well as other family members and the children of the man who led their treatment and wrote about it and has put together the most complete work on what the Genains' lives reveal about the nature versus nurture debate. As much a study of parenting as it is of what psychologists once thought of parents, *Girls and Their Monsters* follows Robert Kolker's *Hidden Valley Road* (2020) as another unsettling, behind-closed-doors look at families and mental illness. —*Colleen Mondor*

Hey, Hun: Sales, Sisterhood, Supremacy, and the Other Lies behind Multilevel Marketing.

By Emily Lynn Paulson.

May 2023. 384p. Row House, $26.99 (9781955905251). 381.

Ever get one of those "hey, hun!" messages enticing you to join a friend selling in a multilevel marketing scheme (MLM)? It might have been from Paulson (*Highlight Real,* 2019). This memoir of working for "Rejuvinat" (pseudonym for Rodan + Fields) is about two addictions: alcohol and the belonging, independence, and affirmation of being a high-achieving "hun" of a major MLM. Paulson cleverly uses MLMs' own methods to sow doubt about the predatory techniques used to draw in participants; her friendly, informal voice leads the reader through her own redemption tale of escaping Rejuvinat, dropping breadcrumbs on how MLMs use patriarchy, heteronormativity, socioeconomic

YA Recommendations

Adult titles recommended for teens are marked with the following symbols: **YA,** for books of general YA interest; **YA/C,** for books with particular curricular value; and **YA/S,** for books that will appeal most to teens with a special interest in a specific subject.

disparities, and white supremacy culture to pit women against one other in the race towards their own "free" car. Paulson's cautionary tale is one of influencer culture, the isolation of middle-class motherhood, and her attempt to make amends for the way her alcoholism and addiction to the MLM culture has harmed others. A must-read for fans of Amanda Montell's *Cultish* (2021) and Sara Petersen's *Momfluenced* (2023). —*Erin Downey Howerton*

His Majesty's Airship: The Life and Tragic Death of the World's Largest Flying Machine.

By S. C. Gwynne.

May 2023. 320p. Scribner, $32 (9781982168278); e-book (9781982168285). 363.12.

Gwynne (*Hymns of the Republic*, 2019) meticulously recounts the final flight of the British airship R101 and the entire zeppelin era in this engaging history of an overlooked subject. Destroyed in a devastating crash on its maiden voyage in 1930, with 48 fatalities, the R101 was heralded as Britain's great entry into long-distance flight (nearly impossible for airplanes at the time). The doomed flight was scheduled to leave from England and arrive in Karachi, India, but it crashed in a storm in France. Gwynne documents how the poor weather conditions were known early on, but there was command confusion, leading to his examination of the struggle between the official captain and Major Herbert Scott, the "country's preeminent airship pilot," who was supposedly just riding along but was given authority over the route and in-flight decisions. There is plenty of international zeppelin history here, but it is the personal conflicts in the R101 control room, exacerbated by Scott's spiraling problem with alcoholism, the social context, and the near minute-by-minute presentation of the tragic flight that will capture reader attention. —*Colleen Mondor*

The Joy of Politics: Surviving Cancer, a Campaign, a Pandemic, an Insurrection, and Life's Other Unexpected Curveballs.

By Amy Klobuchar.

May 2023. 368p. St. Martin's, $30 (9781250285140). 328.73.

In our increasingly contentious political climate, Minnesota senator, former presidential candidate, and author Amy Klobuchar (*Antitrust*, 2021) invites readers into her life, both personal and professional, over the last few years. With honesty, she shares difficulties like the loss of her father, her battle with breast cancer, and her husband's COVID-19 illness, alongside amusing anecdotes, such as accidentally ordering four quarts of pumpkin yogurt and arguing over Wi-Fi with her family members (her TV appearance trumps their gaming needs), in her wry take on pandemic life. Klobuchar's focus on joy remains a constant throughout, as she shifts scenes from private to national, detailing the 2020 campaign, the George Floyd murder and aftermath, and the January 6 insurrection from her front-row perspective. She writes conver-

High-Demand Hot List

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

This month's Hot List is here for you with the newest books from faves and big-buzz first-time authors. —*Susan Maguire*

Amazing Grace Adams. By Fran Littlewood. Henry Holt, $27.99 (9781250857019). Sept.

A woman facing down middle age walks across London to regain her status as "amazing" from her husband, her teenage daughter, and herself in this funny debut being compared to *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* and *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*.

The Breakaway. By Jennifer Weiner. Atria, $28.99 (9781668033425). Aug.

Old hurts are confronted and new truths revealed in this tale of an engaged, plus-sized woman leading a bike tour from New York City to Niagara Falls, who discovers among her charges a former one-night stand with whom she still has electric chemistry, and her overbearing mother.

Black AF History: The Un-Whitewashed Story of America. By Michael Harriot. Dey Street, $32.50 (9780358439165). Sept.

Combining provocative storytelling with deep research from primary sources and the work of Black scholars, political commentator Harriot corrects the whitewashed record of American history with the lesser-known stories of Black Americans.

Black Friend. By Ziwe Fumudoh. Abrams Image, $26 (9781419756344). Oct.

Fumudoh asks provocatively dark, hilariously awkward questions on her Showtime talk show, *Ziwe;* here she brings that same energy to a collection of essays that explores our understanding, or misunderstanding, of race.

Bright Young Women. By Jessica Knoll. Scribner/Marysue Rucci, $27.99 (9781501153228). Oct.

Knoll's first book, *Luckiest Girl Alive* (2015), was a best-seller turned Netflix movie. Her next thriller, set in the 1970s, brings together two women affected by the crimes of a Ted Bundy-esque serial killer.

The Fraud. By Zadie Smith. Penguin, $29 (9780525558965). Sept.

The latest from acclaimed, best-selling Smith tells the story of Mrs. Touchet, the cousin of a contemporary of Charles Dickens; and of Andrew Bogle, who grew up enslaved on a sugar plantation in Jamaica but made his way to London and became the star witness in a celebrated trial.

The Golden Gate. By Amy Chua. Minotaur, $28 (9781250903600). Sept.

The debut novel from the author of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011) is a sweeping historical thriller that follows a homicide detective on the trail of an assassin who finds a surprising connection to the death of a seven-year-old heiress at a swanky hotel years earlier.

The List. By Yomi Adegoke. Morrow, $30 (9780063274877). Oct.

A celebrated feminist journalist is #couplegoals with her fiancé until his name turns up on a list of anonymously posted names of bad men in this debut from British journalist Adegoke.

Starter Villain. By John Scalzi. Tor, $28.99 (9780765389220). Sept.

A man inherits his uncle's super-villain business in the latest from Scalzi (*The Kaiju Preservation Society,* 2022), an sf caper set on present-day Earth.

Worthy. By Jada Pinkett-Smith. Dey Street, $32 (9780063320680). Oct.

Hollywood superstar Pinkett-Smith's impressionistic memoir engages with readers, chronicling her life from a childhood in Baltimore to the present, from suicidal depression to self-love, asking readers to bring their own experiences to "the table."

sationally, giving us a peek inside her Capitol Hill work on the 2021 inauguration and key legislation efforts on a host of issues, offering encouragement to those who may follow her into public service. Drawing on inspiring "life lessons" opening each chapter, Klobuchar's memoir overflows with optimism and, yes, joy. —*Karen Clements*

Motherhood on Ice: The Mating Gap and Why Women Freeze Their Eggs.

By Marcia C. Inhorn.

May 2023. 352p. illus. NYU, $30 (9781479813049). 306.874.

Women freeze their eggs mainly because they can't find a reproductive partner, says Inhorn, a Yale professor who studied 150 educated achievers who tried to preserve their fertility this way. She acknowledges the astronomical cost, $10,000 to $15,000 per cycle, $500 to $1,000 for annual storage fees, and $6,000 for "rewarming" and fertilizing. She offers caveats about the physical, financial, and emotional price and lack of guaranteed success. Still, she believes freezing can empower women. Some 82 percent of participants in her study were single, largely because of a lack of eligible, equal partners. Even women in stable relationships were waiting for their men to feel ready for children. So they turned to technology. Will freezing lead to a "reproductive revolution?" It's unclear, but the good news is that children born from frozen eggs do not appear to be more likely to suffer from chromosomal abnormalities or birth defects. As women reach the end of their most fertile years, those who want to keep their biological motherhood options open may find hope and a sense of community in these pages. —*Karen Springen*

The National Parks Scavenger Hunt: A Family-Friendly Way to Explore All 63 Parks.

By Stacy Tornio.

May 2023. 236p. Timber, paper, $17.99 (9781643261768). 333.78160973.

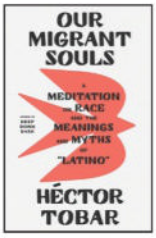
Travel to the 63 national parks can expose kids to a tremendous diversity of landscape, flora, fauna, and interpretive cultural and historical opportunities. It can also include *a lot* of car time and longer hikes than some youngsters are used to. This scavenger hunt travel guide gives families an option for keeping kids engaged during their time in the park and helps to add breadth and depth (and a bit of competition) to their park experience. Since this title includes so many parks in a relatively short volume, the section for each park is fairly brief but still offers a good number of items to spot, from specific critters to landscape structures. A description and mention of the significance is included for each item, though illustrations are not, so families will want to pick up a Junior Ranger booklet at the park office or have a supplemental nature guide on hand. Lists in the back offer a handy way to keep track of the points earned for competitive siblings. A fun encouragement to get out in nature. —*Heather Booth*

Our Migrant Souls: A Meditation on Race and the Meanings and Myths of "Latino."

By Héctor Tobar.

May 2023. 256p. Farrar/MCD, $27 (9780374609900). 305.86.

"What do we pass on to our children when we call ourselves Latino?" This question of legacy is central to Tobar's (*The Last Great Road Bum*, 2020) eye-opening investigation into Latin American heritages, whether identified as Latinx, Latin@, Latine, or otherwise. As the son of Guatemalan immigrants, the question is personal for Tobar, who treats this inquiry with the same rigor and care that enlivens his journalistic nonfiction and historical fiction. In his quest for answers, Tobar travels from Los Angeles to his childhood home in Guatemala, dials back time to encounter imperialist and colonial exploits, and speaks with immigrants, neighbors, and family. Each chapter extends the notion of Latinidad by centering around a different theme. In "Empire," Tobar quotes dialogue from Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* (2021) that equally applies to the lived experiences of Central and South American peoples, "The outsiders ravage our lands in front of our eyes. Their cruelty to my people is all I've known." In "Secrets," Tobar sees in Frida Kahlo a figure of "German-Jewish and Oaxacan-Indigenous descent [who] wears huipiles and Tehuantepec headdresses," and he traces the complicated implications of Kahlo's commodification and absorption into mainstream commercial culture. Timely, intelligent, and generous, this is a must-read from Pulitzer Prize–winner Tobar. —*Diego Báez*



The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation around the World.

By Antony Loewenstein.

May 2023. 272p. Verso, $29.95 (9781839762086). 325.56.

Loewenstein highlights a rarely discussed aspect of Israel's standing in the world, its dominance of the international military, security, and surveillance industries. As one of the largest weapons exporters in the world, its technology has played an outsized role in supporting authoritarian regimes, illegal coups, and dictatorships for decades, often in support of American foreign policy. Loewenstein meticulously documents Israeli connections to antidemocratic coups in Chile, Nicaragua, and Colombia. Israeli's surveillance tools have also been deployed against Americans, the private Israeli intelligence PSY-GROUP spied on American supporters of Palestinian rights, and with the help of Israeli prime minister Ehud Barack, Harvey Weinstein used it in a failed attempt to discredit his accusers and block press stories about himself. By making itself "the indispensable nation" due to its technological prowess, Israel is able to "ensure alliance and friendship, whether from authoritarian or democratic states," while its connections to social media giants have enabled it to block Palestinian villages from appearing on Google maps and censor Palestinian content on Facebook. Citing numerous Israeli and U.S. military and cybersecurity experts, Loewenstein urges a sober re-evaluation. —*Lesley Williams*

Rich White Men: What It Takes to Uproot the Old Boys' Club and Transform America.

By Garrett Neiman.

June 2023. 384p. Legacy Lit, $30 (9780306925566); e-book (9780306925573). 305.5.

Over the past 30 years, the divide between rich and poor has deepened. Nonprofit entrepreneur Neiman tackles the issue of wealth inequality and exposes the deceptions that elite white men use to inherit, grow, and maintain their power—and how to uproot them. The book is divided into two sections, "Old Boy's Club" and "Becoming More Equitable." The first part discusses history, talking about wealth disparity, unequal representation in Congress, especially for Asian Americans, abuse suffered by the poorest in society, and how the elite are sheltered from this. The second half of the book focuses on how to think differently about inequality in terms of race, gender, education, opportunity, and more. Both sections include stories from the many wealthy white men Neiman has solicited for funds over the years. Neiman then presents ways to disrupt the cycle, like paying federal reparations and leveraging connections to dismantle the systems of oppression. This book will appeal to those who are interested in examining racial and socioeconomic segregation and looking to understand diverse viewpoints and how to combat inequality. —*Jennifer Adams*

The Secret to Getting Along (and Why It's Easier Than You Think): 3 Steps to Life-Changing Conflict Resolution.

By Gabrielle Hartley.

May 2023. 224p. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (9781728258911). 303.6.

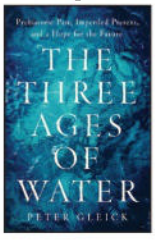
We're surrounded by conflicts at home, at work, online, and in our neighborhoods. Attorney Hartley, who operates a "private mediation practice that centers on alternative dispute resolution," has spent years studying what works and doesn't work in resolving these conflicts. Conflicts can spark growth rather than resentment if handled sensitively, according to the author. Her answer is the YES Method, which stands for understanding Your role, seeking out the Emotional story behind the conflict, and Shelving heated conversations. The author is straightforward and accessible as she describes each step, offering her own or her clients' experiences as illustrations. Focusing on the "why" rather than the "what" of heated encounters, Hartley urges readers to listen carefully and respond rather than react, keeping tempers intact and communications open. Often a small change in habits or a pause to step away from the argument can save the relationship. Prompts for journaling and other exercises help

readers evaluate their own styles and encourage reflection, and each chapter ends with takeaways. This practical volume is sure to find an audience. —*Candace Smith*

The Three Ages of Water: Prehistoric Past, Imperiled Present, and a Hope for the Future.

By Peter Gleick.

June 2023. 368p. PublicAffairs, $30 (9781541702271). 331.91.



Perhaps because it covers about 71 percent of the planet's surface, we often take water for granted. Scientist Gleick buoyantly conveys just how special water is as a basic natural resource essential to survival, a predominant constituent of the human body (accounting for roughly 50–60 percent of an adult's body weight), modeler of the environment, and major factor in human civilizations. He dives into our deep connection with water, blending history, science, technology, climatology, folklore, and policy. Early humans had an intimate relationship with water. The proximity to water fostered growth of societies and made agriculture possible. More recently, our association with water has been about control as we reroute or restrict it, engineer purification systems, design sewers for wastewater, and seek to eliminate waterborne infectious agents. Gleick foresees an optimistic future for water that emphasizes sustainability. He offers prudent policies ensuring the availability of safe water and adequate sanitation for all, addressing climate change, safeguarding the well-being of ecosystems, and reducing water waste. The menace of the bottled water industry, desalinating ocean water, how astronauts on the International Space Station reuse water, the dominant role of water in creation stories, and the origin of earth's water are all explored. An invaluable introduction to hydrology with crucial recommendations for managing the world's water. —*Tony Miksanek*

Uneducated: A Memoir of Flunking Out, Falling Apart, and Finding My Worth.

By Christopher Zara.

May 2023. 272p. Little, Brown, $29 (9780316268974). 378.

Zara (*Tortured Artists*, 2012) lifts a curtain on the American education system and its impact on his professional life, writing with painstaking clarity of every step he's taken to get where he is. The result of this reflection is a powerful story paired with gorgeously crafted writing. Born into a middle-class New Jersey family, Zara's story begins with his failure to finish high school in the 1990s and ends with him being a leading editor at *Fast*

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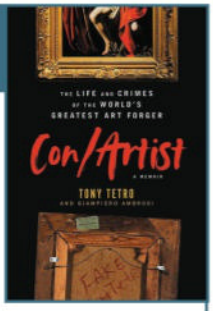
Top 10 True Crime Books



Cold cases, cons, doomsday visions, bad memories, and journalistic zeal propel these gripping true-crime chronicles recently reviewed in *Booklist*. —*Donna Seaman*

The Angel Makers: Arsenic, a Midwife, and Modern History's Most Astonishing Murder Ring. By Patti McCracken. 2023. Morrow, $29.99 (9780063275034).

Auntie Suzy was a friendly village midwife in Hungary a century ago; she was also, as McCracken reveals, the leader of a ring of women who committed dozens, maybe hundreds, of murders.

Con/Artist: The Life and Crimes of the World's Greatest Art Forger. By Tony Tetro and Giampiero Ambrosi. 2022. Hachette, $29 (9780306826481).

Art forger Tetro explains how he created virtually perfect copies of works by Rembrandt, Dali, and Rockwell and was charged in the 1980s with more than 40 counts of forgery.

The Forever Witness: How DNA and Genealogy Solved a Cold Case Double Murder. By Edward Humes. 2022. Dutton, $28 (9781524746278).

Humes chronicles a 1987 double murder of a young couple on an overnight trip to Seattle and how the controversial use of DNA uploaded on popular ancestry databases helped solve the case.

Helltown: The Untold Story of a Serial Killer on Cape Cod. By Casey Sherman. 2022. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (9781728245959).

On Cape Cod in 1969, charismatic drug dealer Tony Costa went on a grotesque rampage; Sherman profiles the serial killer and analyzes the impact the case had on two major writers.

In the Mouth of the Wolf: A Murder, a Coverup, and the True Cost of Silencing the Press. By Katherine Corcoran. 2022. Bloomsbury, $28 (9781635575033).

Corcoran, former Associated Press bureau chief for Mexico and Central America, offers a compelling account of the murder of Mexican journalist Regina Martinez, whose gutsy reporting riled high-ranking officials.

Pesos: The Rise and Fall of a Border Family. By Pietro La Greca Jr. and Rebecca Paley. 2022. Amazon/Little A, $24.95 (9781542033466).

La Greca's intense true-crime family history charts his fierce conflicts with his ruthless father, the owner of a currency exchange on the California-Mexico border, who laundered money for gangsters.

Satellite Boy: The International Manhunt for a Master Thief That Launched the Modern Communication Age. By Andrew Amelinckx. 2023. Counterpoint, $27 (9781640094802).

Amelinckx tells the overlooked story of Intelsat I, the first commercial communications satellite, and how it helped catch supercrook Georges Lemay.

Trailed: One Woman's Quest to Solve the Shenandoah Murders. By Kathryn Miles. 2022. Algonquin, $28.95 (9781616209094).

In 1996, Julie Williams and Lollie Winans were murdered in Shenandoah National Park; journalist Miles shares her far-reaching discoveries about this unsolved case.

Vanished in Vermillion: The Real Story of South Dakota's Most Infamous Cold Case. By Lou Raguse. 2023. Post Hill, $18 (9781637587256).

Raguse tackles a complex, 1970s cold case about the disappearance of two high-schoolers, Sherri Miller and Pam Jackson.

When the Moon Turns to Blood: Lori Vallow, Chad Daybell, and a Story of Murder, Wild Faith, and End Times. By Leah Sottile. 2022. Twelve, $30 (9781538721353).

Lori Vallow was a picture-perfect Mormon mother until she got involved with gravedigger-turned-doomsday-novelist Chad Daybell, who convinced her that dark spirits had overtaken her loved ones.

Focus on True Crime

Art from *Pulling the Chariot of the Sun.*

The Art Thief: A True Story of Love, Crime, and a Dangerous Obsession.

By Michael Finkel.

June 2023. 240p. Knopf, $28 (9780525657323). 364.1523.

Finkel (*The Stranger in the Woods*, 2017) presents a roller-coaster read of hubris and romance, contradiction and despair. French art thief Stéphane Breitwieser's story is full of epic highs that seem never-ending and crucial questions regarding his mental state and motivation. He is a man who "exempt[ed] himself from the rules of society." Over nearly eight years, Breitwieser stole a work of art once every dozen or so days, amassing over 300 objects, including engravings, weapons, tapestries, and paintings. Acting on instinct, often spontaneously, improvising, and thrilled by the challenge, Breitwieser seems to have reveled in the exhilaration aroused by taunting the authorities. But he also comes across as lonesome, guided by passion and aesthetics, and obsessed with acquisition; he kept all that he stole. Is he criminally insane? Immature and spoiled? Certainly his unquenchable thirst for stealing art was indulged by the people who loved him and whom he loved, including his mother, and his crimes ultimately destroyed their lives. Finkel examines the circumstances that fed Breitwieser's obsession and led to his downfall. —*Anne Doventry*

Coal Country Killing: A Culture, a Union, and the Murders That Changed It All.

By Robert K. Tanenbaum and Steve Jackson.

June 2023. 336p. Post Hill, $30 (9781637588482). 364.1523.

The United Mine Workers Union of America (UMWA) was formed in 1890 to protect the men who labored in the coal mines of Appalachia. Cave-ins, explosions, and black lung disease were ubiquitous in the mine worker's life, but over time, the UMWA became a force for mine operators to reckon with. After a deadly mine collapse in 1968, the leadership of UMWA president Tony Boyle was challenged by his former ally, Joseph "Jock" Yablonski, who believed that the workers had been misrepresented and ran against Boyle in the 1969 election. The bad blood between them culminated in the murders of Yablonski and his wife and daughter on December 31, 1969. Prolific crime novelist Tanenbaum (*Without Fear or Favor*, 2017) and true-crime writer Jackson (*No Stone Unturned*, 2015) deftly portray the way of life that embodies the coal miner and the staunch loyalty that led to the shocking acts of violence committed against the Yablonski family. This is an illuminating nonfiction thriller with the inherent suspense of a novel. —*Philip Zozzaro*

The Con Queen of Hollywood: The Hunt for an Evil Genius.

By Scott C. Johnson.

June 2023. 352p. Harper, $30 (9780063036932); e-book (9780063036949). 364.

Con games, by their very nature, are elaborate and hard to follow, created by tricksters who rely on retaining ultimate control of intricate and often illogical narratives by employing devious methods of impersonation, intimidation, and manipulation. One of the most diabolical of such intrigues can be attributed to the Con Queen of Hollywood, an impostor so adept at vocal impersonation that he convinced his victims he was anyone from a high-powered female Hollywood producer to a male terrorist launching international bomb threats from a prison cell. Johnson, a *Hollywood Reporter* journalist, weaves a gripping true-crime narrative of the multiple-personality fraudster Harvey, who bilked dozens of movie-industry adjacent workers out of their life savings with outlandish promises of lucrative employment on projects that turned out to be nonexistent. In consultation with a private security analyst equally determined to expose this one-person crime syndicate, Johnson deploys victim interviews, international travel, and even encounters with Harvey himself to reveal the details of the sociopathic behavior that enabled him to deceive his victims and avoid detection. —*Carol Haggas*

Devil's Coin: My Battle to Take Down the Notorious OneCoin Cryptoqueen.

By Jennifer McAdam and Douglas Thompson.

Aug. 2023. 256p. illus. Morrow, $28.99 (9780063219182); e-book (9780063219205). 364.168.

McAdam, with journalist coauthor Thompson, tells the incredible journey of how she, a Scottish grandmother and the daughter of a coal miner, went from cryptocurrency fraud victim to a champion for herself and the millions of others who were deceived by OneCoin, losing their savings for a total of $27 billion worldwide. Her memoir is both a cautionary tale and a story of endurance in the pursuit of justice. Readers will come to understand McAdam's health conditions as well as her fascination with OneCoin's founder, Ruja Plamenova Ignatova, who would later be convicted for fraud. McAdam relates how she worked with law enforcement to uncover the scandal, weathered death threats, and continued to tell her own story and push for awareness in the media. Readers interested in true-crime tales of deception and scams, cryptocurrency, and blockchain technology will find this book fascinating as it unfolds McAdam's point of view on the personal and worldwide impact of the OneCoin scandal. —*Raymond Pun*

Don't Say a Thing: A Predator, a Pursuit, and the Women Who Persevered.

By Tamara Leitner.

June 2023. 460p. Amazon/Thomas & Mercer, $28.99 (9781542039451); paper, $16.99 (9781542039444); e-book (9781542039437). 346.1.

Emmy- and Peabody-Award–winning journalist Leitner's first book, the true-crime investigation of a serial rapist, was more than two decades in the making. In 1999, Leitner's neighbor was raped in the apartment across the hall, and Leitner's dog located a watch that the rapist dropped during his flight. The deep investigation that Leitner engaged in uncovered an impressive level of detail, and she doesn't shy away from the darker and more graphic elements of the crimes. Indeed, these details haunted her for years, especially as she began to connect the depraved criminal's impact on his victims to the subterfuge, gaslighting, and betrayals that her own partner engaged in over decades. This title will satisfy readers who seek out true crime written from a personal angle, like Erika Krouse's *Tell Me Everything* (2022), and those who appreciate precisely detailed and unflagging

police and journalistic work in search of justice, like Michelle McNamara's *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* (2018). An epilogue shows the long-lasting and varied impact these crimes had on the survivors. —*Heather Booth*

Evidence of Things Seen: True Crime in an Era of Reckoning.

Ed. by Sarah Weinman.

July 2023. 304p. Ecco, $29.99 (9780063323926); e-book (9780063233935). 364.

Journalist Weinman, author of the excellent *Scoundrel* (2022), serves as editor of this collection of 14 true-crime essays. Here's a story about a lynching that went unsolved for decades because the police didn't give a damn; a very interesting reappraisal of the writings of true-crime writer and novelist Edna Buchanan; a piece written by Amanda Knox, wrongly convicted of murder, who discusses the way her name and story are frequently used (or abused) without her permission; and an examination of the way amateur sleuths can bring justice when law enforcement cannot. While the writing styles vary, the focus does not: this is a book about finding justice in a system that can frequently be unjust. These are stories about inequality, victims who must fight to be heard, and the tendency of the legal system to marginalize, or ignore, entire groups of people. Although the essays are for the most part objective and dispassionate, the book still engenders frustration at the injustices perpetrated by the legal system. A valuable addition to the ever-growing genre of crime nonfiction. —*David Pitt*

Genealogy of a Murder: Four Generations, Three Families, One Fateful Night.

By Lisa Belkin.

May 2023. 432p. Norton, $29.95 (9780393285253). 364.1523.

Journalist Belkin offers a historical example of the "Butterfly Effect"—the concept that the smallest of individual actions can impact an unknowable number of others—in analyzing a tragedy with intergenerational effects that occurred through a combination of personal responsibility, small decisions, and random circumstances. The author's stepfather is one of three men whose lives fatefully intersected, resulting in the murder of a police officer on July 7, 1960. Belkin reviews the history of each family involved, beginning with their immigration at the turn of the century. She augments collected data with an interleaving narrative to compare how each family's motivations, socioeconomic status, cultural differences, and adaptability determined each man's role on that critical day. During her research, Belkin also uncovered contradictory objectives and missteps leading to an ill-conceived parole system. Readers will be grateful for the prefacing family trees to disentangle an intricate web of relationships. True-crime aficionados will savor the detailed depiction of the crime and references to the notorious Leopold and Loeb murder case that tangentially contributed to its outcome. —*Joelle Egan*

Little, Crazy Children: A True Crime Tragedy.

By James Renner.

June 2023. 320p. Kensington/Citadel, $28 (9780806542553). 364.1523.

Cleveland suburb Shaker Heights, a tight-knit community bursting with hometown pride, suffered a brutal tragedy one fatal night in 1990. Lisa Pruett was just 16 years old when she was ruthlessly stabbed to death only 30 feet from her boyfriend's home. The town erupted in a cloud of rumors and suspicion. Could one of their own be capable of such a heinous act of violence? Their picture-perfect, upper-class facade was shattered to reveal a dark underbelly of secrets. Investigative journalist Renner lays out Lisa's case like a prime time police procedural, re-creating conversations and courtroom scenes through careful research. Despite a highly publicized trial, Lisa's murder remains unsolved. Renner presents it as a cautionary tale of how police tunnel vision and media interference can hinder the path to justice. He introduces readers to other suspects who didn't reach the limelight and offers hope that new advances in genealogical DNA research could help catch Lisa's killer. This title is extremely engrossing and well crafted. Recommended for true-crime fans of *Little Fires Everywhere.* —*Michelle Ross*

YA: *The complicated dynamics of teenage friendships presented in this tale will resonate with high-schoolers interested in true crime. MR.*

Narcas: The Secret Rise of Women in Latin America's Cartels.

By Deborah Bonello.

July 2023. 224p. Beacon, $27.95 (9780807007044). 364.14.

Cartels are usually seen as male-driven organizations, and men like El Chapo have become the popular faces of the illegal drug trade. Women are nearly invisible, and when they are revealed, they are perceived as subordinate to the men, offering support or enduring oppression. Journalist Bonello offers a more nuanced view of the places women, las narcas, hold in cartels. By conducting in-the-field investigations, visiting towns in Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, and interviewing women in the drug trade or those who knew them, Bonello profiles narcas who, for their own various reasons, have acquired influence and even power in cartels. Women like Digna Valle and Marllory Chacon Rossell, referred to as the "female El Chapo." They come from backgrounds that vary from privileged and educated to desperately poor. Hidden in the shadow of powerful men, the narcas make their own marks through alliances, appeals, and persuasion. Bonello presents a complex report on women's roles in a world of extreme machismo and an eye-opening challenge to the perception of women involved in the complicated and brutal world of cartels. —*Cynthia Dieden*

Pulling the Chariot of the Sun: A Memoir of a Kidnapping.

By Shane McCrae.

Aug. 2023. 272p. Scribner, $27 (9781668021743). 364.154.

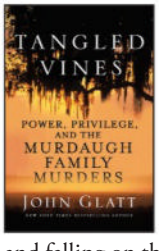
Poet McCrae (*Cain Named the Animal,* 2022) examines his childhood kidnapping and the impact it had on his memory going forward. As a Black child stolen at age three and then raised by his white grandparents, McCrae was raised as white himself. He grew up uncertain of what parts of his life were real; many scenes of this memoir entail him trying to recall the most basic facts about when and how an event took place, whether it was landing his first trick on a skateboard or starting a new school. McCrae communicates this sense of uncertainty through constant repetition. Mundane actions that could be communicated in a single sentence get stretched into whole paragraphs. His maximalist style makes this a difficult memoir to digest. Although McCrae's life is haunted by his early kidnapping as well as his grandfather's abuse, he relates explicitly violent details sparely. More than a traditional true-crime narrative, this is an interesting read for those curious about hybrid forms of poetry and nonfiction. —*Zeja Z. Copes*

YA: *Teen readers may be interested in McCrae's attempts to recreate his childhood in this coming-of-age memoir. ZZC.*

Tangled Vines: Power, Privilege, and the Murdaugh Family Murders.

By John Glatt.

Aug. 2023. 320p. St. Martin's, $30 (9781250283481); e-book (9781250283498). 364.1523.



The horrific double homicide may have thrown the South Carolina low country into an unflattering national spotlight, but the murders of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh are but two in a series of tragedies. At the center is Maggie's husband and Paul's father, Alex, a former lawyer descended from a long line of South Carolina prosecutors. Investigative journalist and veteran true-crime author Glatt (*The Doomsday Mother*, 2022) tells the story, from the first Murdaugh solicitors to hold office through Alex's 2023 trial, including the several deaths in Alex's orbit: Stephen Smith, his son Buster's classmate, who was found dead under suspicious circumstances in 2015; longtime housekeeper Gloria Satterfield, who died after allegedly tripping and falling on the Murdaugh's property in 2018; Mallory Beach, Paul's 19-year-old friend, who was killed in a 2019 boating accident while Paul was driving drunk. And of course, the 2021 shooting deaths of Maggie and Paul on the family hunting property. Adding to the horror, Alex all the while was stealing millions from his clients' settlements, including from the sons of his deceased housekeeper. With the flurry of recent coverage, including Netflix and *Dateline* documentaries, readers will be swept up in this account of the circumstances that enabled such tragedies. —*Courtney Eathorne*

YA: *True-crime–obsessed teens will be hooked. CE.*

Continued from p.7

Company magazine. In between, we see Zara struggle with heroin addiction and come out the other side, feeling like we are walking alongside him on the slush-drenched streets of a New York City winter, heading to another dead-end job. Zara's memoir goes beyond the average story of personal adversity. Through it all, he matches each setback with a palpable sense of hope; readers can't help but cheer for him, for example, when, working at *Show Business Weekly*, he takes the brunt of his boss' angry outbursts and mood swings. It's clear that Zara is meant for bigger things. More than anything, Zara writes a necessary and inspiring story about how we are more than our educational histories. —*BoDean Warnock*

Science

The Cat's Meow: How Cats Evolved from the Savanna to Your Sofa.

By Jonathan B. Losos.

May 2023. 400p. illus. Viking, $28 (9781984878700); e-book (9781984878717). 636.8.

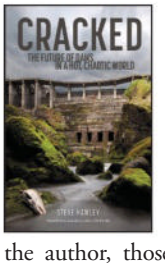
Evolutionary biologist Losos shares his passion for the species *felis catus*. Detailing everything from cats' origins in Africa to what their future might hold, Losos describes the possible quest for a saber-toothed housecat. Personal anecdotes regarding the author's own pet cats make his genuine interest apparent and lend a personal touch to the text, including the discussion of whether domestic cats should be indoor or outdoor. From genetic tests performed on ancient Egyptian cat mummies to the use of transmitters and kittycams to study the activities of outdoor cats (wild, feral, and domestic), the text is lively and engaging. While Losos provides a comprehensive view of the evolution of cats, including genetics and breeding, the explanations are clear and accessible. In addition, black and white drawings of different cats appear throughout the book along with robust footnotes sharing further thoughts and observations. Fascinating, fun, and full of facts, this thorough investigation will appeal to general readers and cat lovers alike. —*Maren Ostergard*

Cracked: The Future of Dams in a Hot, Chaotic World.

By Steven Hawley.

May 2023. 328p. Patagonia, $28 (9781938340772). 672.82.

Environmental journalist Hawley, whose *Recovering a Lost River* (2012) likely helped spur legislative action to remove four federal dams to resuscitate one of the great salmon rivers of the world, the Snake, here uses a wider lens to examine the dubious value of many of the other dams built worldwide in the last century. According to the author, those dams have decimated fish populations, undermined fragile ecosystems, inundated sacred grounds, created a massive methane footprint, cost outrageous public sums to build and maintain for the actual value they provide to farmers and the electrical grid, and threatened public safety—some 15,600 "high-hazard" dams in the U.S. would cause significant loss of life if any failed. These dams have also lost more water to evaporation than they've provided to the cities they were intended to serve. Hawley does an excellent job of laying out the history of dam building, especially in the arid American West; its failings; some recent successes in reopening rivers (the Elwah, for example); the mechanics—and grassroots politicking—of dam removal; and viable alternatives to dams, like underground storage of water and solar power. Lavishly displayed color photographs help illustrate Hawley's narrative, which might motivate a nationwide rethinking of these extravagantly expensive, outdated systems. —*Alan Moores*



Ice: From Mixed Drinks to Skating Rinks—A Cool History of a Hot Commodity.

By Amy Brady.

June 2023. 336p. Putnam, $28 (9780593422199); e-book (9780593422205). 551.

Ice is everywhere. We put it in our drinks, use it to numb pain and injuries, and have machines in our kitchen that make it on demand. Given its ubiquity, it's remarkable how little attention we've paid to its history. Environmental historian Brady is on a mission to fill this gap. Ice has played a central role in the evolution of culture, economics, and technology from the sixteenth century on. It revolutionized how we live: what we eat and drink, the sports we play, and how we treat illness. Ice, along with the rise of car culture, led to the invention of convenience stores. Ice even helped elect one the United States' most popular presidents. But our obsessive pursuit of cold via refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners is also a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and a driver of global warming. Ironically, the growing role of human-made ice in our lives has caused the crucial loss of ice on earth. Brady's history of ice focuses a fascinating lens on how our modern world came to be. —*John Keogh*

The Jewel Box: How Moths Illuminate Nature's Hidden Rules.

By Tim Blackburn.

May 2023. 288p. Island, $30 (9781642832730). 595.78.

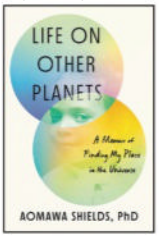
Author Blackburn is a professor and field researcher who specializes in the impact of alien species on ecosystems. This book indulges his personal passion—moths—while exploring the interconnectedness of populations within ecological communities. Chapters are filled with stories about the author's interactions with moths, research regarding his study and classification of various species, and technical discussions of the roles caterpillars and moths play in enhancing, disrupting, and even destroying the life cycles of plants, insects, birds, and animals. Much of the conversation revolves around survival and the interplay of predators and prey as various species thrive and others disappear within the greater complexity of environmental webs, bringing in weighty considerations of ever-evolving systems, evolution, and extinction. Blackburn frequently interrupts his narrative to describe the exquisite beauty of one specific moth, in evident awe. He also introduces each chapter with particularly apt quotes. These touches complement the author's final assertion: that all species, including humans, are special and crucial to the survival of the planet. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Life on Other Planets: A Memoir of Finding My Place in the Universe.

By Aomawa Shields.

June 2023. 352p. Viking, $28 (9780593299180); e-book (9780593299197). 520.92.

There seems to be no shortage of memoirs about Black scientists in the field of astronomy lately, including *A Quantum Life* (2021), by Hakeem Oluseyi. This iteration drives home the point that it doesn't matter how uneven and uncertain the path is, as long as you ultimately get there. Shields shares her engaging journey, during which she found herself on two trajectories due to her love of celestial bodies and her unexpected passion for acting. She didn't have a shortage of role models. Her mom had a PhD in music theory, and her grandmother majored in math back in the 1930s. Shields attended Phillips Exeter Academy, graduated from MIT, and pursued a doctorate in astronomy. When acting classes became more appealing than doing problem sets, she abandoned the stars to try to become one. A fruitful encounter with Neil deGrasse Tyson realigned her space-designated coordinates and she went back at age 34 to finish her PhD degree in astrophysics and astrobiology. Shields' unusual and inspiring account will appeal to readers who feel stuck in life. Discussing relatable issues like making decisions, financial worries, and imposter syndrome while she shares her approach to achieving lofty goals, Shields' words will reassure readers who question their abilities when success seems elusive. —*Andrienne Cruz*



YA: *Young people will benefit from Shields' candor about her internal turmoil over educational and career choices. AC.*

Life Sculpted: Tales of the Animals, Plants, and Fungi That Drill, Break, and Scrape to Shape the Earth.

By Anthony J. Martin.

May 2023. 368p. Univ. of Chicago, $27.50 (9780226810478). 560.

Paleontologist Martin surveys the ubiquitous process of bioerosion, how life is "changing the solid to the not-so-solid." In this continuous transformation of our planet, all kinds of organisms exert their "biological superpowers" to successfully assault hard matter, including rock, shell, bone, and wood.

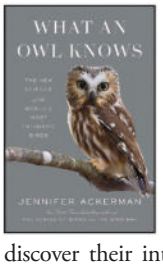
These "bioeroders"—bacteria, barnacles, birds, elephants, fish, fungi, humans, lichens, rodents, termites, and many other creatures—excavate, decompose, recycle, and ultimately remodel the earth. Much of Martin's discussion involves ichnology, the study of trace fossils, such as tracks, burrows, bite marks, holes. He describes how snails drill into their prey, pine beetles munch trees, otters use rocks as tools to bust clam shells, and stingrays emit high pressure jets of water to expose quarry hiding in sediment. Martin's writing is witty, rich in facts (the teeth of beavers are enhanced with iron), and spiced with eclectic references, such as the films *Jurassic Park*, *Alien*, and *Jaws*, authors ranging from Aeschylus to H. P. Lovecraft, and TV shows *House Hunters* and *Breaking Bad*. Mingling geology, biology, and paleontology, Martin has fashioned a unique and engaging portrait of the earth's many movers and shakers. —*Tony Miksanek*

What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds.

By Jennifer Ackerman.

June 2023. 352p. Penguin, $30 (9780593298886); e-book (9780593298893). 598.9.

Always eloquent and engaging, science writer Ackerman (*The Bird Way*, 2020) turns her attention to owls, those mysterious, nocturnal birds that everyone can recognize but few really know. Due to their cryptic plumage and nighttime habits, owls can be difficult to study, but new technologies and approaches have allowed researchers to discover their intimate lives. In this captivating survey of what makes an owl an owl and how different species "owl" in disparate ways, Ackerman delves into the biology and natural history of owls around the globe. She joins field scientists as they study owl adaptations; learn the vocabulary of hooting, chittering, and other owl vocalizations; observe courtship and chick rearing; and determine why some owls migrate, some stay put, and some join together in enormous roosts. One fascinating chapter delves into how much we've learned from captive, mostly rehabilitated, birds, while another answers the question of whether owls are truly wise. Ackerman's latest vivid and compelling narrative is enlivened by her own passion for owls and her excitement over discoveries in the wild that show that, for humans, owls continue to be full of surprises. —*Nancy Bent*



YA/S: *Perfect for nature-curious teens who want to learn more about these enigmatic birds. NB.*

What It Takes to Save a Life: A Veterinarian's Quest for Healing and Hope.

By Kwane Stewart.

May 2023. 224p. HarperOne, $28.99 (9780063215825); e-book (9780063215849). 636.

Reader be warned: Stewart's memoir is a guaranteed tearjerker. The California-based veterinarian tells his life story, beginning in his teen years, through ups and downs: divorce, a near-suicide attempt (one in six vets consider suicide), financial overextensions, health issues. Through it all, the animals prevail, whether it's Stewart's Doberman, Baron, or Solly the pug, who belongs to Jennifer, a person experiencing homelessness. On Skid Row, Stewart tends to the pets of those who land there. His work in shelters informs discussion of animals designated to be euthanized and how he saves those he can. Among the most emotional stories sure to touch readers in some way are those of Don and his blind dachshund, Loca, and of the ways animals can cure PTSD and other mental health issues. Through it all, Stewart even finds a bit of humor: "Animals come easily to me, but I'm always stepping in it when it comes to humans." With his moving story, Stewart, who founded the charity Project Street Vet, just might have his animal-lover readers reaching for their wallets too. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Health & Medicine

America's First Plague: The Deadly 1793 Epidemic That Crippled a Young Nation.

By Robert P. Watson.

June 2023. 272p. Rowman & Littlefield, $26 (9781538164884); e-book (9781538164891). 614.5.

In the spring and summer of 2020, when COVID-19 alarm was at its zenith, many reports emerged saying that we had done this before. Those reports told the story of the 1918 flu, which killed almost 700,000 people in the U.S. and a mind-blowing 50 million people worldwide. Now comes historian Watson to say that, actually, COVID-19 was the nation's third plague. The first? A 1793 outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia, then the capital of the fledgling United States. Five thousand of the city's 50,000 residents died, making this, percentagewise, the worst epidemic in American history. Another 20,000 residents fled the city, including federal government officials, who were ordered to leave by President Washington. Watson illustrates how all the same controversies or conspiracies of COVID-19 were present then, too: immigrants were blamed for introducing the disease; some people practiced social distancing, others didn't; and Dr. Benjamin Rush, who identified the disease, became both hero and pariah. Additionally, patients were treated with purging or bloodletting. Watson recreates this terrifying era with the skill of a novelist, and readers will be enthralled. —*Anthony Aycock*

Hot and Bothered: What No One Tells You about Menopause and How to Feel like Yourself Again.

By Jancee Dunn.

May 2023. 304p. Putnam, $29 (9780593542569). 618.1.

Menopause gets short shrift. No more. Dunn, a longtime health journalist, shares the skinny on the hot flashes, sweatiness, and moodiness that many women experience in the years surrounding their last menstrual period. Her mother "gritted through the Change." Now women are talking about the once-taboo topic. Dunn gives good health information about hormones and insomnia, but it's her candor and humor that make this guide stand out. For example, Dunn notes that other big milestones, like marriages and the birth of babies, are celebrated, but no one holds menopause showers, with "gifts like neck cream, portable fans, and vaginal lube." Dunn interviews a who's who of ob-gyns, including one doctor who sadly notes that menopause gets "the worst PR." Stop with the negative words, like "withered," "significant loss of breast volume," and "having less sex." It's a natural, normal (and long) stage of life: The average age of menopause is 51, and the average life expectancy of an American woman is 80. Here's to reacting to it, as Dunn concludes, "with a shrug." —*Karen Springen*

In the Blood: How Two Outsiders Solved a Centuries-Old Medical Mystery and Took on the US Army.

By Charles Barber.

May 2023. 320p. Grand Central, $29 (9781538709863); e-book (9781538709887). 616.9.

For a long time, the primary way to stanch the flow of blood from battlefield wounds was applying manual pressure to the wound site and covering it with gauze. More recently, the U.S. Army invested considerable resources to develop better treatments for controlling traumatic bleeding. Their preferred remedy didn't work well. Then they tried a costly drug originally designed for treating hemophiliacs, but it was associated with a life-threatening side effect. When engineer-entrepreneur Frank Hursey experimented with the mineral zeolite, he experienced a eureka moment. The inexpensive, absorbent crystalline material would be capable of slowing bleeding and easy to use. Teaming up with salesman Bart Gullong, the two men developed QuikClot. While other branches of the military confirmed its effectiveness and embraced its utilization, the controversial director of army trauma medicine and research obstinately refused (for unclear reasons) to green-light its use. Nevertheless, Hursey and Gullong persisted, eventually formulating an improved version, QuikClot Combat Gauze, now in use. Serendipity, an unusual collaboration, and perseverance successfully come together in this infuriating but ultimately triumphant story. —*Tony Miksanek*

Living Medicine: Don Thomas, Marrow Transplantation, and the Cell Therapy Revolution.

By Fred Appelbaum.

May 2023. 320p. Mayo Clinic, $27.99 (9798887700151). 617.4.

"Every time I perform a bone marrow transplant it seems like magic," oncologist Appelbaum confesses. Bone marrow is the principal site of blood-cell construction from red blood cells, white blood cells, and plate-

lets. Bone-marrow transplantation is a valuable treatment for leukemia, aplastic anemia, and other serious blood diseases. Appelbaum pays homage to the procedure itself, the numerous doctors and researchers involved in the work, the brave and sometimes desperate patients, and the many altruistic donors. He spotlights the pioneer of bone-marrow transplantation, Edward Donnall Thomas, recipient of the 1990 Nobel Prize in Medicine. Appelbaum writes reverently about Thomas, from his youth to his education, family, professional career at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, a lawsuit charging research misconduct (for which he was acquitted), and legacy. The history of bone-marrow transplantation is vividly chronicled, medical science is clearly conveyed, how the process works is plainly reported, and acute and long-term side effects are made known. Appelbaum zealously describes failure and success, grief and joy as he shares the current effectiveness and greater availability of a lifesaving therapy. —*Tony Miksanek*

Muscle: The Gripping Story of Strength and Movement.

By Roy A. Meals.

June 2023. 304p. illus. Norton, $28.95 (9781324021445). 611.73.

People are fascinated, admiring, and perhaps a bit envious of chiseled muscles and perfect physiques. There's something about well-developed muscles that shouts fitness and energy. Incorporating science, art, culture, and history into his discussion, orthopedic surgeon Meals celebrates this aspect of the human body. For starters, muscle comes in three varieties, skeletal (comprising roughly 40 percent of body mass), smooth, and cardiac. Skeletal muscles come in all shapes and sizes, from longest, the sartorius (in the thigh), to smallest, the stapedius (in the ear). Readers without a science background will probably find the book's coverage of anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology a hefty lift. Meals also reports on exercise and conditioning (both aerobic and resistance training), nutritional supplements, bodybuilding, and ancient sculptures featuring prominent musculature. Explanations of fast-twitch and slow-twitch muscle fibers, rigor mortis, goosebumps, and even sword-swallowing are included. This illustrated book serves as a companion to Meals' more entertaining *Bones* (2020). Anyone who doesn't have a buff body and a ripped six-pack can still dream while learning about the marvelous muscles we all do possess. —*Tony Miksanek*

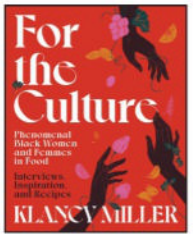
Cookery

For the Culture: Phenomenal Black Women and Femmes in Food.

By Klancy Miller.

Sept. 2023. 320p. Harvest, $40 (9780358581277); e-book (9780358576235). 641.5.

Writer and pastry chef Miller (*Cooking Solo*, 2018), who holds a Diplôme de Pâtisserie from Le Cordon Bleu Paris, celebrates Black women and femmes in food-related fields—farmers, activists, chefs, celebrities—with this book of recipes and interviews. She starts readers off with an inspirational reflection on women who paved the way, like chefs and cookbook authors Edna Lewis and Barbara Elaine Smith (aka B. Smith), and explains how their work encouraged the author's own culinary journey. Readers meet everyone from farm managers (such as Leah Penniman) to cookbook authors (Jerrelle Guy), many of whom include their own recipes in this collection. Dishes include Caribbean green shrimp, pasta di San Lorenzo, and red palm nut cheesecake. Readers will feel like they are actually talking to these amazing women Miller profiles as they share stories of their childhoods, families, communities, careers, and, of course, food. All of this is accompanied by beautifully drawn portraits of each interviewee. Honoring Black creators past and present from all over the food world, this book is a treasure and a love letter to Black women everywhere. —*Nataya Culler*



The Joy of Oysters: A Complete Guide to Sourcing, Shucking, Grilling, Broiling, and Frying.

By Nils Bernstein.

May 2023. 200p. illus. Artisan, $30 (9781579659981). 641.6.

The gustatory bounty of the world's oceans appears not just in its vast depths but also near the seashore, where oysters lie in beds waiting to be plucked from rocky crevices, pried apart, and speedily devoured in all their briny freshness. Every terrestrial shoreline seems to feature a different variety of oyster, ranging from the barely bite-sized to giants virtually requiring knife and fork. Aficionados describe the flavors of their favorites with vocabularies as extensive as wine connoisseurs employ. Bernstein carefully catalogs all these varieties, from African mangrove oysters to Korean flat oysters. His description of the multiple stages in an oyster's life cycle will fascinate any nature lover. After carefully instructing in techniques to safely cleave the bivalve's shell, Bernstein, food editor at *Wine Enthusiast*, lists a number of sauces for oysters, along with—for the raw-food averse—plenty of recipes for grilling, baking, frying, stewing, and roasting them. In one aside, Bernstein proposes that vegans can eat oysters, pointing out that plants can communicate better than heartless, nerveless, brainless oysters. —*Mark Knoblauch*

Love Is a Pink Cake: Irresistible Bakes for Morning, Noon, and Night.

By Claire Ptak.

May 2023. illus. Norton, $35 (9780393541113); e-book (9780393541120). 641.8653.

Former Chez Panisse pastry chef Ptak famously delivered Harry and Meghan's lemon and elderflower wedding cake at the Royal Wedding. The Violet Cakes bakery owner shares that recipe here, along with her love for pastries both flavored and colored by nature. Peach leaves imbue custard with almond flavor, and fig leaves give a coconutty aroma to some of the summer fruit recipes. Taking inspiration from her native California and adopted British homeland, her desserts run the gamut from more basic cobblers, angel cakes, brownies, and pastry doughs to sweets featuring complex flavors, like blackcurrant and violet sorbet, pistachio green plum cake with candied violets, wild fennel and roasted fig friands, and ras el hanout snickerdoodles. Grape slab pie, which calls for Concord or Fragola grapes that must be seeded by hand, "will take you a long time to prepare" Ptak writes, reassuring that "it will be so worth it to see the purple smiles of your very satisfied friends." Ptak's love for nature's bounty shines through in this collection for fans of farm-to-table baking. —*Jessica S. Levy*

Love Japan: Recipes from our Japanese American Kitchen.

By Sawako Okochi and others.

May 2023. 272p. illus. Ten Speed, $30 (9781984860521). 641.5952.

Sawako Okochi and Aaron Israel, restaurateurs behind Brooklyn's Shalom Japan, are bound to change perceptions about home-cooked Japanese food as they weave stories around 80-plus recipes, with help from co-author Gabriella Gershenson. In addition to the introductory blurbs for each dish and the authors' recommended (and extensive) precooking setup—pantry staples, produce, equipment—are many lessons: the three different types of tofu; cherry tree traditions and worship; sushi selection tips; the art of rice. Then, let the good foodstuffs roll: bonito-cured lox, flounder in a pouch, chicken meatballs, Japanese rolled cabbage, tofu Caesar, fuji apple upside-down cake. Riffs on American and Jewish favorites abound, like homestyle matzo ball ramen or the hambagu melt, which substitutes meatloaf for the traditional burger. Israel himself was once "skeptical" about ketchup pasta with bacon and onions, but it's sure to dazzle taste buds. Occasionally lengthy instructions cover critical how-tos, and step-by-step photographs accompany a few of the dishes. It's gohan desuyo (time to eat)! —*Barbara Jacobs*

Midwest Pie: Recipes That Shaped a Region.

By Meredith Pangrace.

May 2023. 141p. illus. Belt, paper, $18.95 (9781953368522). 641.86.

Pies, both sweet and savory, pop up across the American continent, but nowhere as much as on Midwestern tables. Meredith Pangrace scoured sales and shops for old community cookbooks and even cast-off recipe card boxes. Here, she presents her findings, interpreting often terse directions to build this unpretentious little book that will summon up old memories for some and introduce others to an era when seasonality often dictated what sort of pie might show up on the dinner table. For fruit pies, apples, berries, cherries, persimmons, peaches, and plums all star in

both fresh and dried fruit versions. Cream pies, with their rich and unctuous puddings, peak loftily with meringue and whipped cream. Flavors exotic to middle America, such as pineapple, banana, and lemon, thrill with their sometimes-pricey rarity. Depression and deprivation pies, such as chess pie and shoofly pie, show what inventive cooks could muster to treat their families when pantry shelves had turned bare. Just two savory pies make it into Pangrace's inventory: Nebraska's runza and Upper Michigan's pasty. Includes period photographs. —*Mark Knoblauch*

Real Thai Cooking: Recipes and Stories from a Thai Food Expert.

By Chawadee Nualkhair and Lauren Lulu Taylor.

May 2023. 160p. illus. Tuttle, $24.99 (9780804855587). 641.59593.

The duo of food writer Chawadee Nualkhair (*Thailand's Best Street Food*, 2022) and recipe tester/editor/photographer Lauren Lulu Taylor brings readers a cookbook that is just as much a guided tour of Thailand's food culture. With tips and background knowledge, this book will teach readers how to make everything from dips and sauces (nam prik tomato chili dip) to street food (Thai sukiyaki), main dishes (Massaman curry), and desserts (mango sticky rice). The authors go a step further, sharing Thai cooking secrets, like using only unscented oils and serving food at room temperature; exploring Thailand's regional cooking styles (northern regions rely on heartier dishes, while southern cuisine tends to be spicier); and offering menu suggestions with various combinations of appetizers, mains, and desserts that go well together. This book will be well appreciated by anyone looking to make Thai food at home. —*Nataya Culler*

The Arts

The Daddy Diaries: The Year I Grew Up.

By Andy Cohen.

May 2023. 288p. Holt, $29.99 (9781250890924). 791.4502.

In 2014, author Cohen—TV producer extraordinaire, host of *Watch What Happens Live*, perennial MC of New Year's Eve festivities, and BFF of reality-show housewives—published a diary about a star-studded, gala-hopping year. His major takeaway was that his adoption of a dog, Wacha, brought unexpected meaning to his life. Then came *Superficial* (2016), filled with ruminations on Cohen's romantic relationships and frenzied fame in the face of turning 50. This current offering comes as Cohen says he's finally grown up, seeing as he's now a single dad to preschooler Ben and infant Lucy. Fans will be happy to know that Cohen's gossipy gushing still works well, whether he's dropping scandalous celebrity scoops or bemoaning sleep deprivation caused by teething (Lucy's, not his). Somehow, a sweet story of a family coming together emerges amidst all the name-dropping and breathless reportage. The takeaway this time? Despite qualms about a quieter, less alcohol-infused lifestyle and chronic FOMO, Cohen finds that time at home, snuggling with his kids, is exactly where he wants to be. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Holding the Note: Profiles in Popular Music.

By David Remnick.

May 2023. 304p. Knopf, $30 (9781400043613). 780.

Remnick, *New Yorker* editor and Pulitzer Prize–winner, traces his love for music back to his father who made sure his sons saw the greats of the time perform. Remnick continues that family tradition in this gathering of exceptionally vivid and melodic profiles of musicians late in life. Written over the past three decades, these are keenly observed, deeply felt, and judiciously detailed encounters of genuine communion mixing interviews, biography, and analysis, all lyrically and radiantly composed. The opening essay about Leonard Cohen establishes Remnick's sensitivity to how musicians feel about reaching an advanced age as they look back while still creating and performing. There's a bittersweet quality to Remnick's perceptions of these legendary figures. He offers arresting insights into Luciano Pavarotti, Aretha Franklin, and Buddy Guy; a funny and lacerating portrait of Keith Richards, fresh takes on Paul McCartney, Mavis Staples, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, and Patti Smith. The most surprising profile, "The Bird Watcher," tells the mesmerizing story of radio host and "Talmudic" Charlie Parker fanatic Phil Schaap. There is acuity here, bemusement, tenderness, and gratitude. —*Donna Seaman*

Mozart in Motion: His Work and His World in Pieces.

By Patrick Mackie.

June 2023. 368p. illus. Farrar, $30 (9780374606206); e-book (9780374606213). 780.92.

In an intriguing blend of biography and deft musical analysis, poet Mackie creates a gallery of the composer's masterpieces expertly framed in the cultural setting of eighteenth-century Europe. Contemporary art, politics, music, and society are used to great effect as background for a score of Mozart's compositions. Piano sonatas (in A minor, C, A and F), symphonies (in E flat, G minor and C), operas (*Don Giovanni*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute,* and *Idomeneo*), and more are discussed in musical terms as well as from the historical perspective of a turbulent century on the brink of modernity. Mackie skillfully draws from the composer's voluminous correspondence, observing, "Mozart's ranging letters comprise the second most important source for coming to understand him, his musical work being of course the first by far," and mines the best of Mozartian scholarship, writing in clear and insightful prose. After perusing the pages of this thoughtful and beautifully written book, readers will want to discover, or rediscover, the timeless music of this beloved composer. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Walking with Sam: A Father, a Son, and Five Hundred Miles across Spain.

By Andrew McCarthy.

May 2023. 256p. Grand Central, $28 (9781538709207); e-book (9781538709221). 791.4302.

Wasn't he in those movies in the eighties? Now a director, travel writer, and the author of two previous memoirs and a YA book, McCarthy *(Brat: An 80s Story,* 2021) this time around shares his journey walking the 500-mile Camino de Santiago with his 19-year-old son, Sam. The author had taken the same trek 26 years earlier and wanted to repeat the experience, preferably before his son left home; Sam's recent breakup provided the ideal opportunity for the month-long trip. The daily rigors open doors to talks about music and food as well as to deeper conversations about life and purpose. Sam ruminates on lessons learned from his ex, and McCarthy reflects on his difficult relationship with his own father while seeking to impart important truths in moments of receptivity. Both learn about their strengths and frailties during their time together. McCarthy's depiction of the rewarding endeavor of walking the Camino with his son is both worthwhile and entertaining. —*Karen Clements*

Literature

The Book of Charlie: Wisdom from the Remarkable American Life of a 109-Year-Old Man.

By David Von Drehle.

May 2023. 208p. Simon & Schuster, $26 (9781476773926). 810.

When columnist David Von Drehle and his family moved to the suburbs of Kansas City, Missouri, in 2007, he met his neighbor, Charlie White, who at that point was 102 and still going strong. This book chronicles Charlie's life against the backdrop of the twentieth century and its revolutionary changes in science, technology, medicine, and culture. Born in 1905, Charlie learned early on about the unexpected chaos of life. His father died in a tragic accident, leading his mother to take in boarders to earn money. Some were missionary healers, who inspired Charlie to pursue a career in medicine. Charlie began his medical career in a time before penicillin, when removing a patient's tonsils was still the cure for many ailments. Von Drehle tells Charlie's history interspersed with background on concurrent major events and historical figures. Throughout the book, he highlights lessons from Charlie's experiences: resilience, lifelong learning, and appreciation for the current moment. *The Book of Charlie* looks at universal truths through the lens of one man's long life. —*Laura Chanoux*

Floppy: Tales of a Genetic Freak of Nature at the End of the World.

By Alyssa Graybeal.

May 2023. 280p. Red Hen, paper, $18.95 (9781636280974); e-book (9781636280981). 810.

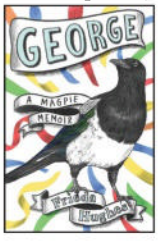
Growing up, Alyssa Graybeal was convinced the world would end in 2012. Diagnosed with

Ehlers-Danlos syndrome at age 10, she also knew her body would deteriorate over time; EDS could even cause her heart to explode. In comparison, the world ending doesn't sound so bad. "The apocalypse would get me before I degenerated," she writes. In her candid debut memoir, Graybeal reflects on her journey with a chronic illness she did not always fully understand. Alternating between childhood and young adulthood, her honest and sometimes raw recollections of her experiences are colored with the constant aches, pains, and injuries she incurs from everyday activities, like walking downstairs. It is only in her thirties that Graybeal seeks out testing and treatment, learning that there are ways to manage her condition. This is not a tidy story, but in its messiness, Graybeal's book reflects the complexity of life with EDS. Those coming to terms with their own chronic illness or that of a loved one will find this unflinching memoir illuminating. —*Rebecca Hopman*

George: A Magpie Memoir.
By Frieda Hughes.

June 2023. 272p. illus. Simon & Schuster, $28 (9781668016503). 810.

Painter and poet Hughes spent her peripatetic childhood moving from place to place with her father, poet Ted Hughes, after her mother, poet Sylvia Plath, died by suicide. All



Frieda wanted was a forever home. When she found the house she could grow into, she began to fill it with pets and the grounds with gardens as she finally set down roots. And then came an interruption. A windstorm brought down a magpie nest with one survivor. She named this screeching, feathered scrap George. In this lovely chronicle of setting aside life's usual demands to meet the immediate needs of an orphaned magpie chick, Hughes records her fascination with George as he grows and joins (and nearly takes over) her family. In lyrical prose full of introspection and humor, Hughes describes George being washed by her dogs, his learning to fly, and his curiosity about everything. Caring for George eventually sent the author in new directions, culminating with her adoption of two owls. This is a perfect match for *Featherhood* (2021), by Charlie Gilmour, the son of a poet who also rescued a magpie. Enlivened with Hughes' drawings, this portrait of a bird mirrors how each of us maneuvers through our own existence. —*Nancy Bent*

The Leaving Season.
By Kelly McMasters.

May 2023. 304p. Norton, $29.95 (9780393541052). 814.

A few years into their marriage, McMasters (*Welcome to Shirley*, 2015) and her artist husband bought a ramshackle farmhouse in rural Pennsylvania, hours away from their home, work, and lives in New York City. It was a fixer-upper that was always falling apart. McMasters' husband was a skillful carpenter, but a health crisis, money problems, urban/rural culture shock, and just plain bad luck combined to keep the dream of a creative, bucolic escape for the couple just out of reach. When they moved there full time, and their two sons were born, the isolation and the difficulties became even more overwhelming. It's against this challenging background that McMasters shares a wise, honest, and completely absorbing memoir of marriage and motherhood that is particular in the details but universal in a way that will resonate with many readers. Resilience and reinvention are at the heart of it, as she struggles to support her family, raise her sons, and find community and, ultimately, peace. —*Jane Harper*

Meet Me Tonight in Atlantic City.
By Jane Wong.

May 2023. 304p. Tin House, $27.95 (9781953534675). 810.

Her friend coins the term, or the wish for, Wongmom.com, "Like you could just type in what's been on your mind and press enter. It's your mom's voice, saying exactly what you need to hear." In award-winning Wong's unfiltered memoir, her mother is indeed the hero of her aching, angry, surprisingly funny portrait of a poet demanding, fighting, and eating her way to self-acceptance and earned recognition. Her mother enabled their survival when Wong's gambling-addicted, abusive father lost their New Jersey restaurant and then abandoned his family. In adulthood, other men nearly destroyed her, including the vicious Bad One and the ex-fiancé who pressured her to buy his mattress when they broke up. "They tell me I'm badass, a rebel, a brilliant one, and when they realize I actually am, they get mad and leave." Her literary coming-of-age is marked by racism and elision—"if anything, much of my formal education pushed me away from the roots of poetry"—but she persists. "I became a poet from my mother, from her own powers of lyrical divination." Long live Wongmom.com. —*Terry Hong*

Never Give Up: A Prairie Family's Story.
By Tom Brokaw.

June 2023. 160p. Random, $28 (9780593596371); e-book (9780593596388). 810.

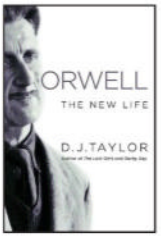
After *The Fall of Richard Nixon* (2019), renowned newsman Brokaw returns to personal history in the latest of his autobiographical works, paying loving homage to two of the Greatest Generation he has famously celebrated, his parents, Red and Jean. With an economy of words but a wealth of emotion, Brokaw evokes his parents' hardscrabble childhoods, their solid and storied marriage, and their struggles to create a secure home for a growing family while confronting the challenges of the Great Depression and WWII. But for Brokaw, his parents' quintessentially Midwestern work ethic didn't seem to be borne of insurmountable strife. Instead, he learned there was nothing that couldn't be mastered by his father's enduring philosophy that inspired the book's title. Such a "can do, must do" attitude informed not only Brokaw's illustrious career but, he argues, is foundational to the country's success. As the U.S. now faces existential challenges to its national character, Brokaw's candid and heartfelt memoir offers a timely reflection infused with his trademark sincerity and unabashed appreciation for the bedrock inspirational values that always deserve attention. —*Carol Haggas*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Brokaw's deep and affirming perspective make him a reader favorite.

Orwell: The New Life.
By D. J. Taylor.

May 2023. 582p. Pegasus, $39.95 (9781639364510). 828.

Dickensian. Kafkaesque. Orwellian. Each of these adjectives signifies a foundational experience of the human condition and, simultaneously, the power of story to communicate said shared experience. Born Eric Blair



in British India, Orwell was raised in Oxfordshire, attended English prep schools, graduated from Eton, and joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. Taylor expertly illuminates how these early influences provided Orwell with a keen interest in the power of language and the language of power. The subtitle of Taylor's authoritative account reflects newly available material but could just as accurately reflect the renewed life given to Orwell in our post-fact world. From fake news and ChatGPT, claims of stolen elections and insurrections, spy balloons and airborne toxic events, our world seems increasingly Orwellian. His novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* are firmly entrenched in the Western canon, and Orwell's journalism and essays are similarly revered and equally influential. Curiously, his uncanny prescience may be related to his self-mythologizing. As Taylor acknowledges, the life of Orwell is, "ultimately, a study of Orwell's personal myth, what might be called the difference between the kind of person he was and the kind of person he imagined himself to be." It is fitting, then, that a man given to perpetuating a myth became emblematic of the practice. —*Bill Kelly*

Story of a Poem.
By Matthew Zapruder.

2023. 200p. Unnamed, $28 (9781951213688). 810.

"Isn't it a privilege," a student prods, "to write poems when the world is burning?" Zapruder's response is a knee-jerk admission that yes, of course it is. While the poet goes on to temper his instinctive response with a desire to shelter the flame of creativity in a darkening world, it's still a difficult question, especially since, at one point in this thoughtful, strikingly candid memoir, the poet sports an N95 mask and clears ash from California wildfires off the windshield of his car. Equal parts autobiography and a behind-the-scenes look into poetic processes, the book is replete with references to influential poets, such as W. H. Auden, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Wal-

lace Stevens. Most captivating are Zapruder's frankness and vulnerability in grappling with big life changes, such as his son's diagnosis with autism as well as his own struggles with alcohol, disturbingly narrated in the third person: "He was turning in very small circles within an ominous whirlpool." A title of interest to poets and creative writers that also extends a lifeline to anyone floating through this strange, uncertain century. —*Diego Báez*

Washed Ashore: Family, Fatherhood, and Finding Home on Martha's Vineyard.

By Bill Eville.

May 2023. 256p. Godine, $26.95 (9781567927382); e-book (9781567927399). 810.

Martha's Vineyard has never been far from Eville's thoughts. Growing up, New Jersey was home, but he spent portions of his childhood on the island, frolicking with family and friends. After the twists and turns of young adulthood, the forces of fate figured into Eville's marriage and eventual return to Martha's Vineyard. In 2008, Eville's wife, Cathlin, was offered a job at the island's First Congregational Church of West Tisbury. The author, now the editor of the *Vineyard Gazette*, sought a job where he could write while also being primary caretaker to the couple's two kids, since Cathlin's vocation was demanding. From Cathlin's battle with cancer to the constant, everyday needs of both children, Eville faced challenges. His reflections detail where he rose to the occasion or faltered. *Washed Ashore* is a genuine memoir of a family man who continues to evolve, whether by will or by force. Eville's forthrightness is refreshing and painfully funny, making this book a joy to read. —*Philip Zozzaro*

Geography & Travel

Elixir: In the Valley at the End of Time.

By Kapka Kassabova.

May 2023. 400p. Graywolf, paper, $17.99 (9781644452332). 914.9.

Perhaps it's the pandemic that has reignited our awareness about our relationship with nature. In her latest chronicle of exploration, Kassabova (*To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace*, 2020) travels to her homeland, Bulgaria, to learn from the elders about nature-based "ailing and healing." She visits the Mesta River basin, where "everything was still connected—peaks, people, plants. This place still has something of the old, wild kind—medicine, meaning, magic." What follows is a magical travelogue in which she weaves plant knowledge with descriptions of healing rituals and stories about the region's long-suffering Pomaks, also known as Bulgarian Muslims. Kassabova's narrative loops and wanders, moving from plant-based healers to the plants themselves and other natives who call the Mesta basin home. Those who enter will be willing to get lost in this beautiful and aromatic maze, in which they will find rich and sumptuous wonders. "Now that we are all ailing, East and West, South and North, we are rapidly coming to a convergence of paths," Kassabova observes. Truer words have not been written. —*Poornima Apte*

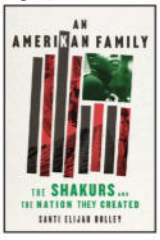
History

An Amerikan Family: The Shakurs and the Nation They Created.

By Santi Elijah Holley.

May 2023. 320p. Mariner, $32.50 (9780358588764). 947.7.

Journalist and creative nonfiction writer Holley explores the history of the Shakur family, activists and revolutionaries whose legacy stretched from the founding of the New York Chapter of the Black Panthers through the socially-conscious lyrics of the late rapper, Tupac Shakur. Holley's prose is captivating, as he describes the lives of Lumumba Shakur, Afeni Shakur, and Sekou Odinga, among others, and their impact on Black nationalism as well as on modern activism. The Harlem chapter of the Black Panther Party evolved from its founding in the 1960s as the movement grew more militant and the FBI increased its surveillance and harassment of party members. In the 1970s, Mutulu Shakur pioneered acupuncture as a treatment for heroin addiction, and in the same decade, Assata Shakur became the face of the Black Liberation Army as its members robbed drug dealers and banks to fund its activities. Increased violence and clashes with the police led to the collapse of the revolutionary collective in the early 1980s, and in the 1990s, Afeni's son, Tupac, connected with marginalized Black youth through his music and art. Holley's riveting, detailed history is essential reading for understanding modern America and the Shakurs' enduring legacy. —*Laura Chanoux*



YA/S: *YAs interested in Black activism and history will connect with Holley's writing. LC.*

Fortune's Bazaar: The Making of Hong Kong.

By Vaudine England.

May 2023. 368p. Scribner, $35 (9781982184513); e-book (9781982184537). 951.2506.

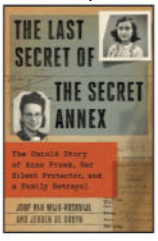
Journalist England's history of the people of Hong Kong celebrates the innovation and vigor catalyzed by the mixing of diverse cultures. Established as a British colonial foothold in 1841, the city enjoyed a deepwater port and favorable location at the crossroads of ancient trade routes. But its true vitality, the author asserts, comes from its people, the "motley crew" of strivers, laborers, entrepreneurs, and intermediaries who built the imperfectly regulated, increasingly prosperous port city. They were not just British and Chinese but, rather, a rich and unique mix of ethnicities and affiliations from across Asia, Europe, and elsewhere. Hybrid identities and multicultural mixings—a massive ecosystem of "in-between people"—would become Hong Kong's norm, the dynamic engine of growth that allowed it to become a major economic hub and cosmopolitan cultural pivot point between East and West. The narrative is largely biographical, anchored in the complex trajectories of individual Hong Kongers. In the epilogue, England reveals that this book is part eulogy, as recent moves by Beijing threaten the "grey zone that had allowed Hong Kong and its multiple, mixed-up peoples to thrive." —*Brendan Driscoll*

The Last Secret of the Secret Annex: The Untold Story of Anne Frank, Her Silent Protector, and a Family Betrayal.

By Joop van Wijk-Voskuijl and Jeroen De Bruyn.

May 2023. 288p. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (9781982198213). 940.5318.

Though the story of Anne Frank is told and retold, her indelible diary read and reread, unsolved mysteries remain about those who hid for 761 days in the secret annex above Anne's father's business in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation and those who cared for them. One puzzle has been why Bep Voskuijl, the youngest of the loyal group of employees protecting the imperiled Jews, hasn't been celebrated as others have, especially given how close she and Anne became. De Bruyn, a journalist consumed by Anne Frank's story, joins forces with van Wijk-Voskuijl, Bep's son, to fully investigate Bep's role and the larger question of who betrayed the people for whom Bep risked her life. As a boy van Wijk-Voskuijl knew how profoundly traumatized his mother was, but couldn't fathom the source of her guilt and shame. He and De Bruyn tracked down everyone alive who might be able to shed light on Bep's reluctance to talk about her part in the most famous of Holocaust stories. What emerges is not only a portrait of Bep in all her altruism and suffering, but also of her sister, Nelly, who scandalously worked for and had affairs with Nazis. Here, too, is van Wijk-Voskuijl's own astounding struggle. The result is a superbly well-written, intimate, engrossing, and heartrending reckoning with the endless damage done by genocide. —*Donna Seaman*



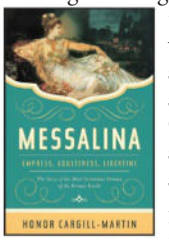
Messalina: Empress, Adulteress, Libertine: The Story of the Most Notorious Woman of the Roman World.

By Honor Cargill-Martin.

May 2023. 432p. illus. Pegasus, $32 (9781639363957); e-book (9781639363964). 937.6.

Classicist Cargill-Martin reexamines the life of a notorious Roman empress in this vibrant tome. History portrays Messalina, the wife of the emperor Claudius, as a sexually insatiable adulteress whose final brazen act of bigamy led to her downfall and execution, but Cargill-Martin looks beyond this salacious scandal recounted by sometimes biased historians to place Messalina in the context of the treacher-

ous and often unstable Roman court in which she spent her life. Born in approximately 20 CE to patrician parents, Messalina grew up during the reign of Augustus' paranoid heir, Tiberius, and married Claudius, who was three decades her senior, soon after the ascension of the vicious emperor Caligula. After Caligula's assassination, Claudius had the support of the populace and military, if not the senate. He and Messalina worked together to eliminate his enemies (and a few of Messalina's rivals) to solidify his position. But Messalina's passionate affairs with a freedman, an actor, and others, culminating in her bigamous union to an aristocrat while Claudius was away from Rome, led to her ultimate undoing. Cargill-Martin does an excellent job of bringing the tumult, intrigue, and danger of the Julio-Claudian dynasty to life, mining original sources to get to the heart of who this complicated woman was in the world in which she lived. —*Kristine Huntley*



YA/C: *A lively, accessible look at the Julio-Claudian era that will appeal to teens interested in the ancient world; contains scenes of sex and violence. KH.*

Paris: Secret Gardens, Hidden Places, and Stories of the City of Light.

By Mary McAuliffe.

May 2023. 304p. Rowman & Littlefield, $26.95 (9781538173336). 914.4.

There's a clear passion for Paris in these pages. Prolific Paris historian and author McAuliffe presents the well-researched history, celebrities, and anecdotes from each of the City of Light's main neighborhoods, from the very touristy Montmartre and Latin Quarter to the not-as-well-known Montparnasse and Grand Croisée. Countless facts astound. The Louvre was built as a fortress against the King of England. Two windmills exist within the city limits. Le Corbusier designed a University of Paris building. And along with the storied Seine, a second river (the hidden Bievre) flows through Paris. There are also entrancing stories of Man Ray's affair with his muse, Kiki; the famous people buried in Père Lachaise cemetery; and the formation of the Eiffel Tower. While there are scattered black-and-white photographs throughout and a city map up front, visuals of streets within each chapter (and more illustrations overall) would transform this Paris travel narrative from a nice-to-have to a must-read. —*Barbara Jacobs*

The Sullivanians: Sex, Psychotherapy, and the Wild Life of an American Commune.

By Alexander Stille.

June 2023. 432p. Farrar, $30 (9780374600396); e-book (9780374600402). 973.

In 1957, then-married couple Saul Newton and Jane Pearce opened the Sullivan Institute for Research in Psychoanalysis. The duo's particular psychotherapy practice revolved around dismantling the traditional nuclear family, citing parents as the provenance for all psychological problems. They encouraged creative forms of expression and polyamory. Their freewheeling philosophy attracted famous names like artist Jackson Pollack and singer Judy Collins. As the institute began to grow, patients were encouraged to live communally and started referring to themselves as Sullivanians. The endeavor started harmoniously but devolved into textbook cult behavior as therapists exerted more control over patients' lives. Leadership demanded patients cut ties with their families, broke up relationships, and forcefully separated parents from their children. By the late 1980s, several high-profile custody cases damaged the group's reputation, leading to its dissolution in the early 1990s. Stille interviewed multiple Sullivanians and poured over personal papers and court documents to develop a linear account of the group's astonishing rise and decline. Readers will appreciate this in-depth, endlessly absorbing history of an obscure cult. —*Michelle Ross*

The Uranium Club: Unearthing Lost Relics of the Nazi Nuclear Program.

By Miriam E. Hiebert.

July 2023. 288p. illus. Chicago Review, $30 (9781641608626). 940.53.

Smithsonian fellow Hiebert details the unsettling race between the U.S. and Nazi Germany to unleash the potential of nuclear power. She begins with an in-depth review of element 92, uranium, and its ability to "undergo a different type of breakdown unavailable to the vast majority of the elements on the periodic table: fission." The rise of Nazi Germany motivated established Jewish German scientists who researched quantum physics to emigrate to America. Many readers already know the story of the Manhattan Project, which produced the world's first nuclear weapons, but largely absent from the record is Germany's concomitant chase to unlock uranium's secrets. Near the end of WWII, the Allies launched the Alsos mission primarily to learn the extent of Germany's nuclear energy ambitions and developments. Hiebert details shocking discoveries that emerged, including tons of stored uranium ore and a cadre of scientists tasked with building Hitler's nuclear reactor. After the war, stores of former Nazi uranium were traded on the black market, a precursor to nuclear arms races of the future. An important and timely history. —*George Kendall*

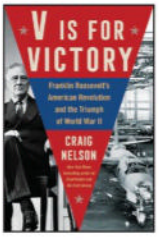
YA/S: *Teens interested in history, science, and innovation will savor Hiebert's relevant account. GK.*

V Is for Victory: Franklin Roosevelt's American Revolution and the Triumph of World War II.

By Craig Nelson.

May 2023. 448p. Scribner, $32 (9781982122911); e-book (9781982122935). 973.917.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's masterful political and diplomatic skills in maneuvering his reluctant nation to confront the Axis powers in WWII is an oft-told history. Prolific U.S. historian Nelson (*Pearl Harbor*, 2016) uniquely focuses here on FDR's organizational talent and his marshaling of American industrial might to provide the materiel that gave the Allies what they needed to face Germany and Japan's military juggernaut. In retrospect, the transformation of American production from peacetime goods to munitions, aircraft, and tanks had its roots in New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, where laborers learned leadership skills and the value of teamwork. Ironically, the plutocrats and industrialists who had opposed such social programs became ardent supporters of Roosevelt's administration, learning to cooperate with government bureaucrats. Roosevelt's demands for decent labor conditions for working people further contributed to both social and industrial aims, including novel ideas like pregnancy leave and childcare. Bitter resistance from the likes of Henry Ford was soon quashed by patriotic unity. All these efforts transformed America into an industrial colossus, the "arsenal of democracy" that lasted into the Cold War years. Nelson's perspective makes this a must-read equally for WWII history buffs and students of supply-chain logistics. —*Mark Knoblauch*



The West: A New History in Fourteen Lives.

By Naoíse Mac Sweeney.

May 2023. 448p. Dutton, $32 (9780593472170); e-book (9780593472194). 909.

While researching in the Library of Congress reading room, Mac Sweeney realizes she is being watched—not by staff, but by 16 statues representing the "grand narrative" of Western civilization. A classical archaeologist and ancient historian, Mac Sweeney considers this group of "elite white men," asking herself who gets to decide which figures best represent Western history. "The shape of history is different depending on your vantage point," she notes, pointing out that history is written from a subjective viewpoint, often by people with an agenda. Mac Sweeney argues convincingly that the commonly accepted history of Western civilization was constructed to "underpin ideologies of superiority, discrimination, and oppression" and proposes it is time to reimagine this narrative. In her detailed and nuanced book, she suggests a revised gallery of statues, with figures representing greater racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and uses those figures to tell a new version of Western history; Al-Kindī and Njinga of Angola are two of the most interesting and memorable figures she proposes. This well-researched revisionist history is recommended for serious students of history. —*Rebecca Hopman*

General Fiction

Adrift.
By Lisa Brideau.

May 2023. 352p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, $16.99 (9781728265681); e-book (9781728265704).

In the near future, a woman wakes on a sailboat, ill and disoriented. When she looks in the mirror, she doesn't recognize her reflection nor does she remember anything at all. She can do things, she knows how to sail, but she doesn't know *how* she knows. A warning note on the table tells her not to look to the past. Thus starts the story of Sarah, who calls herself Ess, and her journey to fill in the gaps about who she is. Climate change has devastated the world: coastlines are flooded, towns have disappeared under the sea, storms are historic. Canada, where Ess lives, is still inhabitable, but experiencing mass immigration. Ess finds a clue, sails a bit south, and despite her fears, finds friends and allies. Warnings continue to appear, but she presses on for information. Any more plot might lead to spoilers for this fast-paced, riveting, not-quite-sf thriller. It is a great read, offering an unsubtle warning of the future, that's suitable for all fiction collections —*Danise Hoover*

The Adult.
By Bronwyn Fischer.

May 2023. 320p. Algonquin, $27 (9781643752723).

Fischer's debut is a compelling and quietly disturbing coming-of-age novel starring sincere yet ambivalent Natalie, a college freshman who leaves her Canadian small town for university in Toronto. There, she tries on various personas but finds it impossible to overcome her anxiety of being thought naive. She meets thirtysomething Nora in the park and is smitten. Nora's attention makes the air seem "newly full." Their relationship gives Natalie a new sense of value—why else would someone like Nora be interested in her? She keeps their relationship secret, only going so far as telling her friend Clara that she has an older boyfriend. Meanwhile, Natalie's experience in poetry class, where she wishes to impress the professor and compares herself to another student, highlights her continued self-doubt, exacerbated by Nora's reluctance to declare her love as Natalie has. It's a power dynamic that's doomed to fail, becoming more complicated as Nora's motivations come into question. Fischer expertly captures the intensity of a first relationship and the constant self-questioning of an insecure young woman. —*Kathy Sexton*

YA: *Older teens will find much to relate to in Natalie's timid navigation of her first year of college. KS.*

The Apartment.
By Ana Menéndez.

June 2023. 240p. Counterpoint, $27 (9781640095830).

The quiet, remarkable lives of the tenants in a South Miami Beach apartment permeate this haunting new novel by esteemed fiction writer and journalist Menéndez. From the opening scene of a nameless woman on the shores of pre-colonial Florida, the reader is addressed and invited to be a witness to the transformation of a unique place over a period of 70 years. Picking up again after the construction of an apartment building in 1942, Menéndez introduces the captivating tenants of apartment 2B, who inhabit a vividly described, mutable city. An air force officer and his young bride are the first to move in, just as the country is plunged into a devastating war. Among the other residents are a concert pianist from Cuba, a Vietnam war veteran, a politically exiled couple, a couple who married for a green card, the husband's lover, and refugees from different parts of the world. Interspersed are interpolations of an omniscient perspective, one that exists outside of time, lending an aura of magical realism.The novel explores many facets of loneliness and isolation and the feeling of being othered and far from home, and it illustrates the often life-saving importance of community. Give to fans of *Stories from the Tenants Downstairs* (2022), by Sidik Fofana. —*Allison Escoto*

Berlin.
By Bea Setton.

May 2023. 256p. Penguin, paper, $17 (9780143137627).

At the center of Setton's debut is Daphne, a listless young woman who tries to escape her problems by moving to Berlin. Daphne is not on a quest to find herself, as that would take too much effort; she has no job, is kept afloat by her parents' money, and is able to explore the city as she pleases. As the novel unfolds, her newfound friendships and romances, though promising at first, are tainted by self-destruction. Daphne turns every interaction into a deceitful performance. Mundane obstacles are made insurmountable in the face of her paranoia, lying, and increasingly severe eating disorder. She cannot decide whether she wants Berlin to be a sparkling new chance or another failure. This tension gets pushed further by some light psychological suspense elements and Setton's anxious, stream-of-consciousness style, which turns everyday life into a landmine. *Berlin* is well suited for those looking for a darker take on the aimlessness of young adulthood. —*Zeja Z. Copes*

The Cafe at Beach End.
By RaeAnne Thayne.

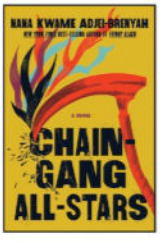
June 2023. 336p. Canary Street, paper, $17.99 (9781335458162); e-book (9780369736697).

Meredith Collins returns to Cape Sanctuary, where she spent the best summers of her life with her grandmother and cousin Tori while growing up. Now that her infamous swindler husband has died in prison, her only assets are a beach cottage and a minority share in a cafe left to her and her cousin by their grandmother. Tori, like everyone else who lost their retirement savings to Meredith's scheming husband, has no space in her life for Meredith, even as Tori and her teen daughter live in one of the three beach houses previously owned by their grandmother. The third is rented out to Liam, who claims to be writing a novel but is actually trying to figure out where Meredith's late husband stashed the stolen millions. As Meredith works in the cafe, a far cry from her former glitzy life, she finds herself drawn into a web of people living complicated lives while trying to support each other. This compelling tale of family and community will please Thayne's legions of fans as well as readers of Susan Mallery and Robyn Carr. —*Diana Tixier Herald*

Chain-Gang All-Stars.
By Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah.

May 2023. 384p. Pantheon, $27 (9780593317334).

Adjei-Brenyah's stellar, stupendous story collection, *Friday Black* (2018), could have been mere prelude to the relentlessly vicious horror of his first novel. In a not-so-unfamiliar alternate America, prisoners convicted of violent crimes are coerced and tortured into joining CAPE—Criminal Action Penal Entertainment—for an almost impossible chance at freedom. Participants become Links in strategically created Chain-Gangs; survival means slaughtering their way through death matches, earning Blood Points. While the controlling corporations rake in the blood money, the public, even young children, cannot get enough. Two of the most beloved Chain-Gang All-Stars are Loretta Thurwar and Hurricane Staxx, both so close to, yet still so far from, getting out. What might seem to be a dystopian nightmare is even more terrifying because Adjei-Brenyah brilliantly broadcasts such irrefutable truths as the U.S. having the world's highest rate of incarceration, with disproportionate numbers of Black and POC prisoners. His chilling footnotes shrewdly interrupt his fiction with real names and stark statistics, exposing racism, inequity, corruption, suicide, and abuse. Prison privatization is already a high-profit industry, as is celebrated, legalized fighting (boxing, MMA, wrestling). Adjei-Brenyah's reality-adjacent tale could ultimately, terrifyingly, prove prescient. Given the rampant, explicit brutality, all should heed a character's warning, "I'll tell you and I can't untell you, you understand?" —*Terry Hong*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: The resounding success of Adjei-Brenyah's first book has his second avidly touted as a most anticipated title of the year.

Direct Sunlight.
By Christine Sneed.

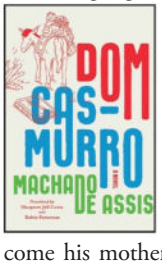
June 2023. 232p. Northwestern Univ./TriQuarterly, paper, $20 (9780810146167); e-book (9780810146174).

Hot on the heels of her excellent novel-in-memos, *Please Be Advised* (2022), this hugely impressive collection shows Sneed's range, humor, and mastery of her craft—this should be required reading for aspiring writers. The opening story, "The Swami Buchu Trungpa," sets the quietly absurd tone of the collection; a visit from the protagonist's mother to her new home in Paris is made complex by her growing doubts about her boyfriend, a lavish guru growing a Parisian empire of mindfulness. Sneed masterfully uses tragedy to create comedy; in "The Monkey's Uncle Louis," a couple unable to conceive adopt a monkey. Animals similarly provide the pathos in "House of Paine," as squirrels torment a couple until the creatures are ethically removed by a pied piper-like figure. Middle-class values are often a source of fun, especially in the excellent "Wedding Party." The high point of the collection, however, is the title story, which dramatizes the aftermath of a 9/11 "hero" who had a second family. Sneed's worlds may vary in form and style but never in quality and are always a joy to inhabit. —*Alexander Moran*

Dom Casmurro.
By Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis. Tr. by Margaret Jull Costa and Robin Patterson.

May 2023. 288p. Norton, $27.95 (9781324090700).

This fresh translation of Machado de Assis' masterpiece by award-winners Costa and Patterson highlights the ambiguities in the great Brazilian writer's original Portuguese text, amplifying themes of deception, uncertainty, and defiance. As a young man, Bento Santiago falls in love with Capitu, the girl next door. To make good on their secret pact to marry, Bento must overcome his mother's vow, made to God after a previous stillbirth, that Bento will become a priest. Years later, having successfully married Capitu (and avoided the priesthood), Bento finds himself beset by doubts as to Capitu's faithfulness, premised upon slim yet persistent evidence—a stray glance, an odd explanation, a cherished son whose eyes resemble those of Bento's best friend, Escobar. Subtly at first, an intimate tale of star-crossed lovers dissolves into a disorienting puzzle of jealous obsession. Originally published in 1899, *Dom Casmurro* continues to confound critics. Is the novel realist or modernist? A religious parable or social commentary on a changing Brazilian society? Did Capitu cheat, or is it all in Bento's head? Calling out some diverse literary references while avoiding over-explanation, translators Costa and Patterson allow readers to draw their own conclusions. The resulting work reminds us just how delightfully enigmatic Machado de Assis can be. —*Brendan Driscoll*



The Enlightenment of Katzuo Nakamatsu.
By Augusto Higa Oshiro. Tr. by Jennifer Shyue.

May 2023. 150p. Archipelago, paper, $18 (9781953861528).

Katzuo Nakamatsu used to be "the irreproachable, reliable professor," until a letter unceremoniously announced his forced retirement. "He was fifty-eight, depleted, old, death was approaching indifferently." His wife died 25 years ago, felled by cancer at just 39. He's childless and parentless and virtually estranged from his more successful siblings. He draws empathic comfort in the (waning) life of poet Martín Adán, who succumbed to mental illness and alcoholism. Nakamatsu, too, continues to withdraw as he wanders the streets of Lima in a fever dream, haunted by bouts of the "clamoring" and "keening" of "colorful wild birds," not unlike a chorus of ghosts from a collective past endured by generations of Japanese immigrants to Peru, "facing up to hatred and rancor born of their being foreigners." In this slim novel originally published in 2003, lauded Peruvian Oshiro manages to expose decades of invisible history, including the U.S.-initiated deportation of Japanese Peruvians to U.S. prison camps during WWII. Talented polyglot Shyue enables Oshiro's debut in English, rendering Oshiro's dense, lyrical prose into a resonating anti-bildungsroman of a man's dissolution. —*Terry Hong*

The Favor.
By Adele Griffin.

June 2023. 352p. Sourcebooks, $27.99 (9781728264059).

Nora knows that she has a better-than-average life—a husband she adores, a job selling the vintage couture she loves, and supportive friends and family. But years of fertility struggles have left Nora emotionally spent and in financial straits. Then Evelyn bursts into her life, a whirlwind of money, enthusiasm, and bonhomie. Nora immediately becomes enamored of Evelyn, and though Evelyn treats Nora as an employee sometimes, offering Nora money to style her for events, she also offers crumbs of friendship often enough to keep Nora invested. Lines are blurred even further when Evelyn offers Nora the favor of a lifetime: to be a surrogate. Empathetically portraying the toll of fertility treatment, Nora's emotional journey will be relatable to many readers. Evelyn remains an enigma, leaving readers uncertain about her intentions, the trajectory of the women's friendship, and the outcome of the story, which provides an underlying tension and mirrors Nora's cautiously hopeful but worried state of mind. Recommended for book groups and readers that appreciate engaging, warm-hearted stories that delve into complex relationships and situations. —*Halle Carlson*

First Position.
By Melanie Hamrick.

June 2023. 336p. Berkley, paper, $17 (9780593638149).

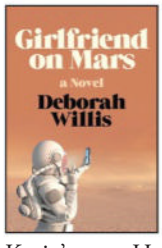
Sylvie Carter is in her fifth year with the North American Ballet. Initially single-minded in her pursuit of perfection (she keeps a list of rules for success), as she ascends the ranks, she starts breaking those rules. A forbidden relationship results in scandal, her career implodes, and she vows to never make a mistake like that again. When Sylvie encounters ballet superstar Allessandro Russo, who joins the NAB as a guest artist, her resolve dissolves, and she starts to spiral downward to the point where she even questions her own sanity. The story travels back and forth in time, sometimes in scenes as nightmarish as any in Darren Aronofsky's film, *Black Swan*. Bad choices, workplace politics, and sexual harassment permeate this dark and sometimes twisted world. Debut novelist Hamrick's 15 years at American Ballet Theatre inform the stage and studio scenes, and balletomanes will buzz about who some of the characters might be based upon. This tale of sex, drugs, and pas de deux will intrigue ballet fans and readers who enjoy edgy, erotic fiction. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Girlfriend on Mars.
By Deborah Willis.

June 2023. 336p. Norton, $28 (9780393285918).

A young Canadian couple finds their love put to the test when one of them joins a reality show on which the two winners will become the first humans not only to set foot on Mars but to live there. Mars! Kevin Watkins is gobsmacked when his high-school sweetheart, Amber Kivinen, tells him she's one of two dozen finalists for *MarsNow*. In their thirties, growing and selling weed from their Vancouver apartment, Kevin and Amber seem happy, at least in Kevin's eyes. Having given up any ambitions of his own, Kevin is forced to watch Amber compete with contestants from around the world and fall for a handsome Israeli. Kevin's own world shrinks as Amber's expands. He stops leaving the apartment, his only human contact reduced to a fellow stoner pal who comes by to watch *MarsNow* with him, the guy who delivers his groceries, and an attractive customer with whom he starts hooking up. For her part, Amber befriends her charismatic novelist roommate and finds ways to game the system, becoming a popular figure with the public until a clever bit of editing threatens to turn her into a villain. Both satirical and sobering, Willis' gimlet-eyed debut spares no one, skewering both apathy and misplaced ambition while keeping the pages turning at a furious pace. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA: *The reality show competition to go to Mars will hook teens. KH.*



The Girls of Summer.
By Katie Bishop.

June 2023. 320p. St. Martin's, $28 (9781250283917); e-book (9781250283924).

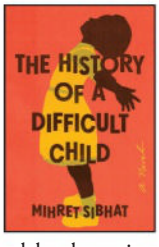
Bishop makes her debut with this lyrical, emotional novel. Rachel is only 17 when she arrives on an unnamed, magical Greek island. Just before she is due to leave, she finds her-

self in a seedy bar owned by a local property magnate, Henry Taylor. Seduced by an older man, Alistair, who works for Taylor, Rachel can't bring herself to return to her native England. She bonds with the beautiful girls on Taylor's payroll, while falling desperately for Alistair. Years later, Rachel visits the island with her husband, and memories of that summer come flooding back. She contacts Alistair, desperate to bring back those heady feelings. But that summer wasn't as ideal as Rachel remembers, and Alistair isn't as perfect as he seemed. The parties, drugs, and sex damaged her, and she must reckon with that. Moving back and forth between Rachel's past and her present, Bishop reveals the full story of that transformative, traumatic summer. Reminiscent of HBO's hit *The White Lotus*, Bishop's tale will draw readers in with its realistic descriptions of the island. The obvious read-alike is *My Dark Vanessa*, by Kate Elizabeth Russell (2020), and the plot-driven tension will appeal to fans of psychological suspense. —*Cari Dubiel*

The History of a Difficult Child.
By Mihret Sibhat.

June 2023. 400p. Viking, $28 (9780593298619); e-book (9780593298626).

"But I want to be the one who forges my own instruments of survival. I want my heart to be the headquarters of my stories." So declares Selam Asmelash, a preternaturally gifted observer of her Ethiopian family and community during the socialist revolution of the 1970s and '80s. Narrating initially from the womb, Selam chronicles the tempestuous marriage of her parents—her passive father, Asmelash, scion of a respected land-owning family, and mother, Degitu, a fierce upstart who fights a lifetime of losing battles with her husband—as well as the gossiping women of her village and her country's leaders. Selam inherits her mother's combative spirit and imagines herself as a leopard (a skin condition produces her spots), calmly planning which of her enemies she will eat first. And there are adversaries aplenty as the family loses their land to socialism, their coffee business to vengeful neighbors, and their traditions to evangelical Christian proselytizers. As Selam comes-of-age, her ferocious resistance to the world's absurd cruelty leads her to defy controlling brothers, petty politicians, and village lunkheads, even taking up arms against God, the ultimate capricious authority. Sibaht tells Selan's tale with verve, offering a vibrant panorama of Ethiopian society in all its complexity with an unforgettable protagonist at the center. —*Lesley Williams*



YA/S: *YA readers of literary and satirical fiction will appreciate Sibhat's intrepid, witty young narrator and her complex world. LW.*

Holding Pattern.
By Jenny Xie.

June 2023. 288p. Riverhead, $27 (9780593539705).

Kathleen Cheng's breakup is the catalyst for putting her graduate program on pause and moving back into her mom's house in California. Still processing a tumultuous childhood full of heartbreak and resentment, Kathleen is shocked to see her mother, Marissa, transformed into a completely different person. While preparing for her upcoming wedding, Marissa presents herself as rejuvenated by love, a far cry from the woman who for so long used alcohol to ease her grief and trauma associated with her struggle with moving from Shanghai to America. Kathleen is given maid-of-honor duties, during which the two find themselves clashing left and right. While Marissa is embracing her new life, Kathleen struggles to move past their painful history. Through unexpected friendships, a new job as a "professional cuddler," and spending more time with her revitalized mother, Kathleen begins to break down the walls she put up to protect herself and find consolation for her past and hope for her future. Xie's novel is full of mother-daughter emotions and beautiful moments of love and light. —*Sabrina Szos*

Hula.
By Jasmin Iolani Hakes.

May 2023. 400p. HarperVia, $32 (9780063276987).

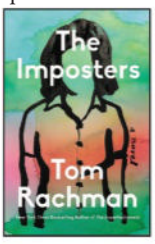
Hakes' immersive and astute debut novel centers on girls coming-of-age in Hawaii and is peppered with Hawaiian folktales and history. After running away from home, Laka returns to Hilo with a baby that looks haole (white) and no explanation. The former Miss Aloha Hula, Laka was a shining star in her native Hawaiian Naupaka family. Now, Laka's refusal to share Hi'i's birth certificate proving her heritage thoroughly displeases her mother, Hulali, who is heavily involved in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. As Hi'i grows up, she thinks that learning traditional hula could heal the rifts in her family. But nothing goes to plan, and Hi'i even believes she brings a curse to her family. Hakes jumps around in time, to Laka's childhood and to Hi'i's adulthood, to reveal family secrets and illustrate the U.S. government's historical failure to honor promises made to the Hawaiian people. It is a strong testament to her writing that the threads of the story are clear, the characters fleshed out, and the history seamlessly tied into what is otherwise a deeply affecting story of mothers and daughters and what makes a family. This should have wide appeal to readers of character-driven stories, family dramas, and historical fiction. —*Kathy Sexton*

YA: *Literary-minded older teen readers will find much to relate to and agonize over in Laka's and Hi'i's story. KS.*

The Imposters.
By Tom Rachman.

June 2023. 352p. Little, Brown, $29 (9780316552851); e-book (9780316553087).

How does a novelist retire? Is there an organization one notifies? Anyone to arrange a cake and a gold watch? These are just some of the questions Dora Frenhofer ponders as she realizes her career as a midlist author is winding down. Nevertheless, she persists, maintaining a regular diary whose entries inspire flights of creativity. She recalls her eternally teenaged brother, Theo, long missing after an ill-fated trip to India. She contemplates her estranged daughter, Beck, a stand-up comedian of some notoriety out in L.A. Most intoxicating, though, are the people whose paths tangentially intersect hers—a fellow author at a writer's conference, a middle-aged delivery man, a friend suffering an unspeakable tragedy. That Dora views theirs lives as more captivating than hers, which seems to be dwindling, is sharpened by the fact that Dora is facing this crisis of confidence as the world is embarking on the pandemic lockdown. Rachman's nuanced exploration of creativity's staying power, a writer's inherent desire for relevance, and the marketplace's malleable definition of success unfolds with refined subtlety through interconnected tales. The characters arguably each deserve a novel of their own, yet it is Dora's story Rachman focuses on with admiration and just a hint of awe. —*Carol Haggas*



Indigo Isle.
By T. I. Lowe.

June 2023. 384p. Tyndale, $26.99 (9781496465597); e-book (9781496465610).

Sonny ran away from South Carolina for the bright lights of Hollywood 15 years ago, leaving her family behind in search of a future in the film industry. Although she has become an adept location scout, the glitz of show business isn't what she imagined, and she is under the thumb of a shady boss who has left her afraid and ashamed. When she returns to South Carolina to scout for a shoot, her director insists that she find a way for them to shoot on reclusive Indigo Isle, owned by Hudson, who has been using the island to hide from demons of his own. Although Sonny and Hudson have a rocky start, as they learn about each other they begin to form a bond that becomes increasingly hard to break—could it be more? With biblical themes of grace and redemption and a story line reminiscent of the prodigal son, Lowe's latest novel will entice readers of religious fiction. The story does have some physical romance, as well as sexual abuse, which may not suit all readers of this genre. —*Margaret Howard*

The Invisible Hour.
By Alice Hoffman.

Aug. 2023. 240p. Atria, $27.99 (9781982175375); e-book (9781982175399).

Hoffman concluded her Practical Magic

series with *The Book of Magic* (2021), but she continues to explore the ravishing Massachusetts countryside and the haunting legacy of the Puritans. Rebellious Boston teenager Ivy, a passionate reader, runs away after becoming pregnant. She ends up at the Community in the Berkshires, a dystopian cult ruled by a charismatic tyrant, Joel, who forbids the reading of books. Ivy's daughter, Mia, is also brave and book-hungry. She finds sanctuary in the town's library and a friend in the librarian, but no one can protect Mia from Joel until she finds a startling escape hatch: a first edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Scarlet Letter*. Hoffman summons all of her extraordinary storytelling magic to whisk us back to Hawthorne's world, turning our ardor for books into a force that transcends time, our love for authors into something truly erotic. As she contrasts women's lives past and present and considers the mysterious compulsions to write and read, Hoffman's fresh and evocative time-travel tale becomes a lush and suspenseful homage to the transporting and lifesaving power of books. —*Donna Seaman*

HD **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Hoffman's bewitchment always draws readers, who will deeply appreciate this imaginative and timely assertion of women's rights and celebration of books, libraries, and the freedom to read.

YA: *Older teens will be enthralled by Ivy and Mia and their struggles for freedom and love of books, as well as the novel's otherworldly dimensions. DS.*

La Vie, According to Rose.
By Lauren Parvizi.

July 2023. 368p. Amazon/Lake Union, paper, $16.99 (9781662509858); e-book (9781662509865).

Combining mystery and romance, this warm-hearted debut touches on the challenging family and work relationships that writer Rose Zadeh contends with, while memories of her immigrant Iranian father's hard work and her mother's strong personality keep her tethered to her home in the Bay Area. Upon being told she needs to take a three-week hiatus from work, she decides to spring herself from her everyday life into what she expects to be an exciting adventure in Paris. However, while intent on experiencing the beauty and wonder of France, Rose finds herself again caught up in relationships, both new and old, that also prove challenging but in different ways from those at home. Rose becomes entangled with unusual characters, such as professor Marco, raconteur Kid, and psychologist Marine, who offer the potential of friendship and romance but with unexpected twists and turns, as they are not always who they seem to be in both disturbing and surprisingly charming ways. This enjoyable book is a testament to how embarking on new adventures can result in positive, life-affirming change. —*Ellen Rubenstein*

A Little Ray of Sunshine.
By Kristan Higgins.

June 2023. 496p. Berkley, paper, $18.95 (9780593547618).

Higgins (*Out of the Clear Blue Sky*, 2022) returns to Cape Cod in this multigenerational story about the enduring bonds of family. Bookshop co-owner Harlow is happy with her life: trivia nights with friends, a close relationship with her grandfather, and a sprawling, quirky extended family. Then teenager Matthew shows up at her store and reveals he's the son she gave up for adoption 17 years ago. Spending the summer with his family on Cape Cod, Matthew hopes to connect with his birth mother—a surprise for Matthew's parents as well, especially his mother, Monica, who is nervous about her son's budding relationship with Harlow. Higgins deftly navigates her characters' complex emotions, including both Harlow and Monica's points of view throughout the book. The women's inner lives are presented authentically, allowing the reader to understand the mixed feelings of joy, fear, love, and guilt that both women experience. Side stories and romantic subplots add depth and humor, but the emotional journey is the star of this comforting-as-a-cozy-sweater story. Hand this one to fans of Susan Wiggs and Jennifer Weiner. —*Nanette Donohue*

The Memory of Animals.
By Claire Fuller.

June 2023. 304p. Tin House, $27.95 (9781953534873).

Neffy is in it for the money. Or so says the marine biologist who enrolls in a vaccine trial for the deadly Dropsy virus that's decimating the world. Exposed to the virus and injected with the vaccine in the hospital, Neffy wakes up to a bizarre environment. The medical professionals have left. The few people who remain are unexposed test subjects. The meager food portions are depleting quickly. Outside the London hospital building, the virus rages, with new variants killing mercilessly. Probably immune Neffy is the only person who could venture outside and find food. Interspersed with the taut hospital narrative are two other story lines: Neffy's love of octopuses and descriptions of her past, particularly her father's illness and an illicit love interest. Fuller (*Unsettled Ground*, 2021) is best when describing the slow unraveling of the hospital group. The other sections are distracting and feel disjointed. Nevertheless, the novel makes us ponder what we owe each other as humans. It turns out the kindness of strangers can only take us so far. —*Poornima Apte*

My Magnolia Summer.
By Victoria Benton Frank.

June 2023. 352p. Morrow, $30 (9780063286153).

In her first novel, Frank takes readers to the South Carolina Low Country with a tale of three strong women that's equal parts hot and sweet. Southern-born Maggie (Magnolia) works endless hours for a difficult chef in New York in the hope of being promoted to sous chef. However, when Maggie gets a call from home that her grandmother is in a coma following an accident caused by Maggie's mother, Lily, those hopes grind to a halt. When Maggie returns home to Sullivan's Island, readers are introduced to an idyllic landscape and a cast of complex characters. While Gran fights to wake up, Maggie's sister, Violet, finds out she's pregnant and deals with a horrible breakup. Meanwhile, Lily slips into bad habits and seems to be taking the family restaurant down with her. Violet and Maggie face the crisis together and help their mother get on a healthy path. They also manage to restore the restaurant to its former glory. Fans of Brenda Novak should take note of a new author to add to their lists. —*Crystal Vela*

One Summer in Savannah.
By Terah Shelton Harris.

July 2023. 464p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, $16.99 (9781728265742).

Eight years ago, Sara Lancaster left Savannah, Georgia, with no intention of ever returning. After being raped at a high-school party and going through a painful public trial, she moved away to raise the daughter that resulted from the assault. However, when her father suffers a serious health crisis, she must return and confront the past she thought she left behind. Jacob, the identical twin brother of Sara's convicted assailant, has also recently returned to the area, and a chance meeting between Jacob and Sara's daughter brings the two families together unexpectedly. As Sara and Jacob tentatively repair old wounds, they face what it means to truly forgive. An emphasis on language and poetry (Sara's father speaks only in snippets of poems) adds a lyrical quality to the story. While there are references to the trauma Sara endured, the novel avoids any graphic descriptions of the incident or immediate aftermath. A natural pick for book clubs—there is plenty to discuss in this thought-provoking, moving story of forgiveness, unexpected connection, and the myriad ways people protect those they love. —*Halle Carlson*

Shalash the Iraqi.
By Shalash. Tr. by Luke Leafgren.

May 2023. 352p. And Other Stories, paper, $17.95 (9781913505646); e-book (9781913505653).

The blog posts of an Iraqi satirist bristle with outrage in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion 20 years ago. By late 2005, the provisional U.S. administration was flailing, infrastructure was collapsing, and insurgent attacks were getting worse. Writing in the Baghdad suburbs, the pseudonymous columnist Shalash al-'Iraqi sounded off about government and society in flux. With sarcastic wit, he chronicled postwar ironies and day-to-day frustrations: the tomb turned rendezvous point for young lovers, the trash collector whose work is thwarted by a new wall and an old portrait, new creativity among the forgers of the Maridi Market. At least for Iraqis with internet access, Shalash became something of a sensation. His collected works, now trans-

lated and categorized as a novel, highlight the blogger's appeal. Shalash's voice—wry, curmudgeonly, emboldened by the occasional sip of arak—offers detached bemusement and world-weary humanity and is just as potent today as it was 18 years ago. But this selection's most powerful moments may be when Shalash's voice breaks, as in a conflicted chapter about Saddam Hussein, and hidden anguish is revealed. —*Brendan Driscoll*

Sidle Creek.
By Jolene McIlwain.

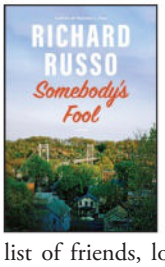
May 2023. 256p. Melville, $17.99 (9781685890414).

In her short stories, McIlwain explores the joys, pains, and trials of ordinary people living in small-town Appalachia. Sometimes her stories are brief snapshots of life in Sidle Creek. In "The List," Hilly Luther calls for her priest to publicly read the names of the men in the town who have sinned, but she meets resistance. In her longer stories, McIlwain digs deeper into what it means to live in a working-class western Pennsylvania town—how people in this community take care and, conversely, hurt each other, and what it means to be an individual there. In "You Four Are the One," a group of sixth-grade girls form a support group to help a pregnant neighbor who is forced on bedrest after many miscarriages. In "Those Red Boots," the owner of a popular diner must reckon with the disappearance of one of his waitresses and the possibility that the culprit might be close to home. Though some of these stories are deeply rooted in the setting, McIlwain also excels at creating a variety of characters who could exist beyond Sidle Creek. —*Jillian Law*

Somebody's Fool.
By Richard Russo.

July 2023. 464p. Knopf, $29 (9780593317891); e-book (9780593317907).

Russo rounds out his North Bath trilogy, following *Nobody's Fool* (1993) and *Everybody's Fool* (2016), with one last wellness check on a cast of familiar characters who remain as frisky as a litter of puppies and often as cantankerous as a pack of wolves. Russo's beloved Sully has died, having just rekindled a relationship with his estranged son, Peter. Now Peter has inherited Sully's Victorian fixer-upper along with an ever-growing list of friends, lovers, and even enemies he's obliged to care for. North Bath being North Bath, this motley crew has its own twisted history of messy relationships that pull a reluctant Peter further into a life in his father's shadow. It doesn't take much to rattle such a tight-knit little world, and this upstate New York town's tectonic plates shift with the arrival of Thomas, Peter's own estranged son, who comes armed with a litany of lies, a sizable chip on his shoulder, and a secret scheme for arson. Russo's beguiling art is the mastery of cloaking complex human emotions and conflicts in surprisingly simple guises, and he brings depths of pathos and wisdom to this Everyman microcosm by challenging its citizens in unlikely ways, only to have them emerge whole and even heroic. There have never been fools in Russo's world, just lovely, relatable people navigating foolish situations. —*Carol Haggas*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Russo's fans are waiting for the last Fool novel, a buzzed-about release backed by a new AMC series, *Lucky Hank,* based on Russo's novel, *Straight Man* (1997), and starring Bob Odenkirk.

South.
By Mario Fortunato. Tr. by Julia Macgibbon.

May 2023. 384p. Other, $18.99 (9781635422047); e-book (9781635422054).

This exuberant, dizzying family saga by Italian novelist Fortunato—his first novel to be translated into English—centers on a hill village in Calabria, the "toe" of Italy. In 99 breezy chapters and an epilogue, it follows the families of the town pharmacist, notary, and lawyer (the notary's son) as they intersect in the marriage of the lawyer to the pharmacist's daughter. These two have several children, the youngest of whom, Valentino, "a narrator who is rather less omniscient than he would like you to think," bears a striking resemblance to the author. While the final chapters are devoted to his coming-of-age, he's a relatively minor character in his own family history. "The past is vaster than the present," he says—and the novel demonstrates—conclusively. Despite the four family trees included (two devoted to the families' servants), readers may have trouble keeping track of the many dozens of characters who vigorously populate the novel. Better to let go and enjoy the wild ride through twentieth-century Italy, both political and personal. —*Margaret Quamme*

Summer on Sag Harbor.
By Sunny Hostin.

May 2023. 416p. Morrow, $30 (9780062994219); e-book (9780062994233).

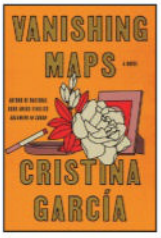
Hostin's follow-up to *Summer on the Bluffs* (2021) follows another one of Ama's goddaughters, Olivia Jones, who inherits a house in an exclusive Black enclave in the Hamptons. Deciding to take the summer to try to reconnect with her late father's estranged family, Olivia moves into the house with her white fiancé, Anderson. She makes fast friends with a group of nearby women, but it's not all smooth sailing: the neighborhood is in danger from an unscrupulous developer who is buying homes from desperate Black residents to build mansions in their place. Then there's Garrett Brooks, a neighbor with whom she immediately feels white-hot chemistry. Hostin packs a lot into this breezy beach read, organically touching on issues of gentrification, racism, colorism, and infidelity while unfolding Olivia's transformation from a slightly uptight perfectionist to a more relaxed woman who knows what she wants. With hints of Elin Hilderbrand's beachy escapism and thematically related to Alyssa Cole's *When No One Is Watching* (2020), *Summer on Sag Harbor* will appeal to readers wanting an escape with a little depth. —*Susan Maguire*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Readers who know Hostin from *The View* will clamor for this summer read.

Vanishing Maps.
By Cristina García.

July 2023. 272p. Knopf, $28 (9780593534748); e-book (9780593534755).

Multilingual translator Ivanito Valverde performs drag and hooks up in the dark corners of Berlin. He is also Celia del Pino's grandson. Those familiar with García's work will recognize this dysfunctional family from her first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban*. Set at the turn of the twenty-first-century, this surprise sequel is told in four sections that follow the Del Pino cousins, siblings, and older (and eventually deceased) scions around the world. The upheaval of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 fractured the family, which refracted from Cuba to the U.S. and Europe. A swirl of sagas bursts from Ivanito's grief. His mother Felicia's ghost shows up at his apartment and, while he enjoys her company and craves her affection, she leaves an invisible halo on his head and dread about her intentions. Long-lost twins and lovers reunite while family members engage and enrage passionately at both extremes of the political spectrum. Thankfully, Ivanito's young nephew brings hope and inspires courage. Readers will commiserate with Ivanito through his trials and tribulations with problematic family members and emotional trauma as García serves up a sabroso (tasty) smorgasbord of muy human family foibles, from obsession to passion, forbearance, and all kinds of love. —*Sara Martinez*



The Wife App.
By Carolyn Mackler.

June 2023. 368p. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (9781982158798).

Many readers will recognize the many ways Lauren, Sophie, and Madeline were unappreciated in their marriages. Determined to demonstrate the value of those tasks everyone assumes that wives will just manage (and maybe get revenge on their ex-husbands in the process), they launch the Wife App, putting a price on everything from scheduling doctor appointments to planning vacations and completing school applications. Like a dating app, it matches "spouses" with wives who will, for a fee, take care of anyone's mental load. It seems everyone needs a wife, and the app soon becomes wildly popular, leading each woman to begin to see her own value. Unfortunately, Mackler's first adult novel

doesn't charm the way her beloved YA books have, with awkward sex scenes that don't quite fit and unrealistic characters and situations more reminiscent of moneyed New York than middle-class women trying to juggle it all. Still, the character development of each of the protagonists, the nod to breaking down gender norms, and a satisfying ending all point to potential for Mackler among the beach-read set. —*Tracy Babiasz*

Historical Fiction

Can't I Go Instead.

By Lee Geum-yi. Tr. by An Seonjae.

May 2023. 384p. Forge, $28.99 (9781250859556); e-book (9781250859570).

Lee's latest (after *The Picture Bride*, 2022) is a moving tale of two women whose futures entwine during World War II and the Korean War. Chaeryeong grows up the privileged daughter of a Viscount, while Sunam is bought as a maidservant for Chaeryeong. As a young woman, Chaeryeong finds herself connected to a Korean independent activist and is sentenced to a term with the Japanese army. Having similar looks, the girls trade places and Chaeryeong is sent off to marriage in the United States while Sunam is sent to be a comfort woman for the Japanese army. Chaeryeong learns to live a poor life with little happiness, while Sunam escapes the Japanese army and uses her identity as Chaeryeong to gain an impressive education. Both women suffer through obstacles and find love, only to find tragedy when they finally return home. War has ravaged their Korean family and home, and they must lead their lives as the real Chaeryeong and Sunam once again. Compelling and inspiring, this story speaks of resilience and determination to make the best out of the situation one has been dealt. —*Emily Borsa*

The Disenchantment.

By Celia Bell.

May 2023. 368p. Pantheon, $28 (9780593317174); e-book, $13.99 (9780593317181).

In the first part of Bell's debut, Baroness Marie Catherine's husband is determined to find the man his valet saw her kissing the day before. Enraged, he asks: "Do you think I'm going to let you put horns on me in my own house?" The reader and the baroness share a secret: Marie Catherine's lover is Victoire Rose de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Conti, dressed in male clothing. An author's note explains that Bell's seventeenth-century Paris-set novel is inspired by actual events, specifically the Affair of the Poisons, in which accusations spread among nobles of poisonings to secure inheritance, which led to paranoia and backlash against women who held intellectual salons and spoke in subversion of patriarchy. A murder catalyzes Marie Catherine's flight through the city, accompanied by people who are mystical and mysterious. The crafting of fairy tales weaves heavily into the novel as Marie Catherine uses the stories to entertain her children, all resulting in a compelling, textured novel of blended genres. —*Emily Dziuban*

The Last Lifeboat.

By Hazel Gaynor.

June 2023. 384p. Berkley, paper, $17 (9780593440315); e-book (9780593440322).

Based on the true story of the 1940 Nazi torpedoing of a ship carrying British children to Canada, Gaynor tells an emotionally compelling tale of two women whose choices in the early war years change their lives. When the British government offers to evacuate 20,000 children, Lily Nelson makes the agonizing decision to send Georgina and Arthur from Blitz-ravaged London to Canada. Alice, a former teacher in rural Kent, signs on to accompany the children on their ocean voyage. When their ship is torpedoed, Alice is in the last lifeboat with 6 boys—including Arthur—and 33 men. As they drift in the ocean, they must fight to survive the storms and hunger. After Lily learns of her daughter's survival and Arthur's death, grief and guilt propel her to demand answers from the program officials. The vivid and accurately portrayed war details give this powerful story a very different perspective on WWII, one that will keep readers riveted and avidly turning pages. Suggest Gaynor's novel to patrons who love strong female characters, authentically nuanced historical fiction, and emotionally compelling stories. —*Merle Jacob*

The Midnight News.

By Jo Baker.

May 2023. 336p. Knopf, $29 (9780593534977).

Baker's follow-up to *The Body Lies* (2019) is a visceral, claustrophobic tale set in 1940s London during the Blitz. Twenty-year-old Charlotte Richmond is living on her own for the first time, working for the Ministry of Information and grieving the loss of her brother, Eddie, in the war. Charlotte, like the rest of London, has learned to live with the terrifying sounds of bombs falling and to quickly seek shelter during the attacks. But when her best friend, Elena, dies during a raid without a scratch upon her body, Charlotte fears Elena was the victim of foul play. Several other women in Charlotte's orbit perish in quick succession, heightening her suspicions, and then she spots a mysterious man following her. With a chorus of the voices of her dead friends ringing in her ears, Charlotte turns to a handsome young man with a disability from a family of undertakers for help, even as her family suspects she's losing her grip on reality. Baker vividly depicts a young woman grappling with a mental-health crisis against the harrowing backdrop of the Blitz. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA: *Teens interested in what it was like to live in London during the Blitz, or in any city under constant siege, will find Charlotte's tale powerfully evocative. KH.*

Romance

Alliance with His Stolen Heiress.

By Lydia San Andres.

May 2023. 288p. Harlequin Historical, paper, $6.99 (9781335723888); e-book (9780369730268).

When fabulously wealthy Amalia Troncoso is abducted during the picnic she planned for her younger sister, Lucia, everyone attending the event is shocked. Well, everyone except for Amalia, since she hired the bandit, Julian Fuentes. It is all part of a plan in which Amalia would use the ransom from her kidnapping to help her and her sister escape from their uncle Francisco, who controls their fortunes with an iron fist. But what Amalia doesn't realize is that Julian is no ordinary bandit, and that their alliance may be in jeopardy, especially after she discovers he has some plans of his own. From its perfectly matched protagonists to its vividly evoked early-twentieth-century Caribbean setting, everything is done with flair and finesse by San Andres, whose refreshingly different love story will be irresistible to readers seeking something new and intriguing in the world of historical romance. —*John Charles*

Even If the Sky Is Falling.

By Farah Heron and others. Ed. by Taj McCoy.

June 2023. 368p. Canary Street, paper, $18.99 (9781335452559); e-book (9780369734242).

This tremendously sexy, moderately suspenseful, and refreshingly diverse romantic anthology takes inspiration from 1990s disaster movies and asks what would happen if the world was ending, and you found yourself isolated with your heart's desire. Taj McCoy starts off with a bang, "All the Stars," in which former flames are reunited on a mission for NASA to alert citizens to take cover during a potential asteroid strike. An accident during their efforts sets off sirens throughout the country, and strangers are suddenly forced to find shelter, not knowing if the world is ending or how long they'll be trapped. In Farah Heron's "Keep Calm and Curry On," two Indian American chefs put their culinary competition aside to comfort each other while they wait for the all-clear. In Charish Reid's "Bunker Buddies," a Black college professor and a Black bookstore owner drink cocktails and get cozy in his cold-war-era bomb shelter. And a lovely Asian American singer hooks up with her sexy Viking-hot contractor in Sarah Smith's "Interlude" as they shelter in her finished basement. Highly recommended for all libraries. —*Kristina Giovanni*

Practice Makes Perfect.

By Sarah Adams.

May 2023. 352p. Dell, paper, $17 (9780593500804).

After accidentally overhearing her date say she was boring, Annie, who runs a flower shop, feels she needs help to become better at dating. Her friends conspire to have Will, a bodyguard for her rock star friend, Rae Rose,

help her. The only thing Will likes about Rome, Kentucky, is Annie. But he wants to finish this job and return to the big city. Annie is nothing like his usual type, yet he loves spending time with her. The fun fake-boyfriend trope turns, as it usually does, into a real relationship, and Annie and Will think about their future while addressing their fears of relationships. Annie and Will are both appealing opposites with plenty of chemistry, and Adams' return to Rome and some characters from *When in Rome* (2022) creates a satisfying arc for readers. While the ending may not be a surprise, it is the perfect conclusion for Will and Annie. Fans of Chandra Blumberg's clever small-town romances may also enjoy this. —*Amy Alessio*

Remember Me.
By Mary Balogh.

June 2023. 368p. Berkley, $28 (9780593438152); e-book (9780593438169).

Lucas Arden, marquess of Roath, may have forgotten Lady Philippa Ware, but Philippa has never forgiven Lucas for nearly ruining her life. Four years ago, while eagerly awaiting her first season in London, Philippa attended a May Day event in her village, where she overheard Lucas informing another gentleman that she was "soiled goods" because of a past scandal involving her father. A mortified Philippa immediately went into social seclusion. Now, just as she is ready to finally make her London debut, who does she encounter at her very first social event but Lucas. After launching her Ravenswood series with *Remember Love* (2022), Balogh continues in splendid fashion with another impeccably written love story that is the perfect recommendation for romance readers who cherish achingly real, multilayered characters, exquisitely crafted prose enhanced with just the right touch of delicately restrained wit, and a brilliantly realized historical setting imbued with a surfeit of carefully delineated details of the Regency world. —*John Charles*

Unfortunately Yours.
By Tessa Bailey.

June 2023. 384p. Avon, $18.99 (9780063239036); e-book (9780063239043).

Navy SEAL turned wannabe winemaker Augustus Cates might be an annoyingly sexy thorn in Natalie Vos' side, but he could also be the key to her career redemption. After crashing and burning in New York's financial world, Natalie returns home to Napa Valley, hoping to draw on her share of the family trust to bankroll her own investment firm. But the terms of the trust dictate that Natalie must be married to receive the funds, which is where Augustus comes into the picture. If Augustus agrees to a fake marriage with Natalie, she will use her family's status as Napa Valley winemaking royalty to help Augustus obtain the loan he needs for his struggling winery. All Natalie and Augustus now have to do is convince everyone that they are madly in love and not just plain mad at each other. The latest addition to the author's Vine Mess books, which follows *Secretly Yours* (2023), is vintage Bailey with heady notes of earthy sensuality and smoldering sexual chemistry neatly balanced by deliciously dry hints of sassy humor. —*John Charles*

SF/Fantasy & Horror

The Book That Wouldn't Burn.
By Mark Lawrence.

May 2023. 576p. Ace, $29 (9780593437919); e-book (9780593437933).

After a series of painful events, young Livira leaves the Dust for the first time and becomes an apprentice in the Library, an endless, mysterious place filled with books from civilizations past and present. In another Library, Evar and his four siblings can never leave. Evar and his siblings are each from a different time, having been sucked into the Library and only spit out much later. Evar has no memory of his life before the Library, only an empty longing for someone he cannot remember. When Evar finds a small book, his life changes and his and Livira's worlds collide. Mixing romance with dystopia and ruminations on knowledge, storytelling, and memory, Lawrence (*The Girl and the Moon*, 2022) offers a fantasy filled with detailed world building and earned twists. Some pacing issues, groanworthy puns (a raven named Edgarallen), and the weight of being first in a trilogy may keep this from wider readership, but Lawrence's readers and all fans of epic fantasy, especially bibliofantasy, will enjoy this start of the Library Trilogy. —*Lynnanne Pearson*

Dead Eleven.
By Jimmy Juliano.

June 2023. 448p. Dutton, $27 (9780593471920); e-book (9780593471937).

Dead Eleven is a creepy, fast-paced blast from the past that unfolds in a place where every year is 1994, an obsession bordering on cultlike infatuation by residents terrified of an ancient, otherworldly power. Willow Stone finds herself drawn to the mysterious, tiny island off of Wisconsin's Door County peninsula. In her search for answers and a fresh start after a family tragedy, she suddenly goes missing, leaving her concerned brother, Harper, tracking her whereabouts. What follows is a clever compilation of events in the form of unsent letters, character recollections, chat and interview transcripts, and journal articles detailing the islanders' bizarre beliefs and the eerie circumstances surrounding Willow's disappearance. Underneath the VHS tapes and whitewash jeans lies the truth to Clifford Island, but is the danger of uncovering fervently guarded secrets worth it? Harper wants to know, and he'll stop at nothing to find Willow, dead or alive. Juliano comes as a new voice in horror, perfect for fans of Stephen King, Grady Hendrix, and Paul Tremblay. —*Verónica N. Rodríguez*

YA: *Although unsettling at times, various teen perspectives make this YA-friendly. VNR.*

Demons of Good and Evil.
By Kim Harrison.

June 2023. 448p. Ace, $28 (9780593437544); e-book (9780593437568).

After fighting for her position in *Trouble with the Cursed* (2022), Cincinnati subrosa (demon leader) Rachel Morgan must deal with an old enemy. Walter returns with a horde of alpha weres from outside the city, hoping to steal power over the city's werewolves from Rachel's ally David. On top of that, Rachel is being investigated by the coven of moral and ethical standards, initially for using an illegal dark curse and then for murder she didn't commit. Coincidentally, Rachel's lover, Trent, is suddenly being investigated for illicit genetic endeavors and Brimstone trade, plunging both their lives into more chaos than usual. After a rescue that involves trading with sullen demon Dali while hiding in the ever after, Rachel and Trent learn that the coven is planning to block demons from returning to reality, led by none other than Walter's ally the Mage, and launch themselves into action to prevent it. Harrison delivers another page-turner in the Hollows series, leaving readers wondering how Rachel will emerge from this crisis and which of her allies will survive it with her. —*Frances Moritz*

The Earthborn.
By Arlene F. Marks.

May 2023. 312p. Brain Lag, paper, $16.99 (9781928011965); e-book (9781928011972).

The first in a planned series of novels about the nigh-immortal Nash'terel follows Bilyash who, at only several hundred years old, is a young apprentice of his people. He is also fascinated by humans and the film industry. Unfortunately his plan to use his natural shape-shifting ability to work as a makeup artist is threatened by the appearance of assassins from the Nash'terel's ancient enemies. Soon Bilyash is on the run with girlfriend Angie (whose mysterious past further complicates matters), his Uncle Maury, and a Chihuahua belonging to a dead film director. Ultimately, Marks' tale is about what risks it's worth taking for independence and freedom as well as respecting tradition and maintaining caution while adapting and enjoying life. The focus on relatable emotions and relationships is grounding as the reader is asked to sympathize with supernaturally powered, energy-stealing alien vampires. Fans of hidden-world novels looking for new secrets to learn and societies to imagine should check out the Nash'terel. And remember, it's not paranoia if Yeng assassins are trying to kill you. —*Sarah Rice*

The Endless Vessel.

By Charles Soule.

June 2023. 496p. HarperPerennial, $30 (9780063043046); e-book (9780063043060).

After a traumatizing opening scene in which the Louvre is deliberately destroyed, Soule (*Anyone*, 2019) reveals a dying world. The Grey has caused a massive shift in society, affecting more than a quarter of the world's population with its three flavors: severe depression, suicide, or a twisted joy manifesting as mania. Those afflicted with the latter version rally behind Aunt Jane and her Team Joy Joy as they work to spread the Grey by destroying humanity's art and history. On the opposite end of that is Lily Barnes, whose purpose is climate-change mitigation, until suddenly her boss finds a miracle solution and lays her off. In her resulting shock, she investigates the solution, leading her to a mysterious group that refers to itself as the Wonder Path and eventually to the more secretive Lazarenes, whose ship has been at sea for a couple centuries. Soule captures the despair and loneliness of people struggling to survive in a damaged world, stringing eager readers along until the very end. —*Frances Moritz*

First Bright Thing.

By J. R. Dawson.

June 2023. 352p. Tor, $27.99 (9781250805546); e-book (9781250805577).

The Windy Van Hooten Circus travels the Midwest in the 1920s, wowing spectators with magic tricks that seem impossible. Rin, the ringmaster, ties it all together. She runs the show along with her wife, Odette, and close friend Mauve. But Rin is haunted by her past and the whispers of the Circus King, promising to reel her back in. Years ago, she lived by his side and under his thumb, bowing to his every whim until she was able to escape and rebuild her life. But he does not take kindly to losing what he believes is his. The sharp contrast between the evils of war (past and future) and the safe place Rin has carved out for herself brings home the concept of finding joy where you can, among the family you choose. Her relationship with Odette renews faith in loving and healthy relationships. While at times the subject matter can be difficult to read, especially Rin's flashbacks, the novel's conclusion rewards persistent readers, who will cheer as Rin faces down her demons. —*Carrie Rasak*

Flight & Anchor.

By Nicole Kornher-Stace.

June 2023. 192p. Tachyon, paper, $16.95 (9781616963927); e-book (9781616963934).

Set several years before *Firebreak (2021),* Kohrher-Stace's newest Firebreak tale follows operatives 06 and 22 as 12-year-olds who have escaped from the Stellaxis headquarters, where they have lived and trained since they were orphaned 4 years earlier in the corporate civil war. Besides discovering that they are woefully unprepared for living on their own as they hide in an abandoned shipping container mere blocks from their home, they also learn of the operatives' merchandise generated by Stellaxis' marketing department. Not only are their own statistics blatantly exaggerated, they are also described as artificial humans made to be perfect weapons, which is outrageous given their vague memories of childhood before being "rescued" by Stellaxis. Relying on dumpster diving, selling recycled cans, and some charity, they struggle to feed themselves while the Director, hiding their escape from the company to protect her job, sabotages their lives with nanobots. This distressing yet delightful prequel explains the history between 06 and 22, cementing the reasoning behind their actions in *Firebreak* and expanding readers' understanding of the dystopian, corporate-owned world Kornher-Stace has created. —*Frances Moritz*

Jackal, Jackal: Tales of the Dark and Fantastic.

By Tobi Ogundiran.

July 2023. 317p. Undertow, paper, $18.99 (9781988964430).

With award nominations piling up for stories scattered across the speculative-fiction-publishing landscape, Ogundiran has, thankfully, gathered 18 of his compelling tales of dark magic in one place. Clearly framed by the author's Nigerian roots but with a conscious nod to dark speculative tales from all over the world, these stories will captivate readers with their haunting atmosphere, confident voice, and immersive settings. The two original stories in this collection are great examples. In "Jackal, Jackal," Ogundiran expertly uses animal masks as an eerie trope in a cautionary tale about what happens when you try to erase the past, injecting it with new terror in just a few short pages. In "Midnight in Moscow," he riffs on the well-known Slavic character of Baba Yaga to showcase the enduring power of folklore across cultures. A great introduction to an up-and-coming author, this book will appeal to readers of dark speculative fiction by writers of color who actively engage with the white Western canon, such as Stephen Graham Jones, Marlon James, and Cassandra Khaw. —*Becky Spratford*

The Measure of Sorrow.

By J. Ashley-Smith.

June 2023. 202p. Meerkat, paper, $17.95 (9781946154774).

While several of the stories in this collection feature horrors that spring from the natural world, such as an infestation of enormous moths, others feature supernatural terrors, often assisted by human acolytes: siblings who sacrifice a schoolmate to earn a boon from creatures who live in the forest, or dealers whose particularly dark party drug creates the right atmosphere for something terrifying to rise from the underworld. Many of the characters are grieving tremendous losses, leaving them broken, isolated, and vulnerable. Repeated motifs among the stories—are the high-end terraria sold at a defunct florist in "The Whatnot Shop" the same ones made by the "Old Growth" protagonist's ex-wife?—hint at connections among the characters or perhaps an extended Ashley-Smith universe. Readers who are comfortable with ambiguity will enjoy these finely crafted, Australia-set short stories, some of which have been previously published. Recommend to readers of single-author, horror story collections such as Nathan Ballingrud's *North American Lake Monsters* (2013); *Ghost Summer*, by Tananarive Due (2015); *The Glassy, Burning Floor of Hell*, by Brian Evenson (2021); or V. Castro's *Mestiza Blood* (2022). —*Stephanie Klose*

More Perfect.

By Temi Oh.

Aug. 2023. 544p. Saga, $19.99 (9781982142834); e-book (9781982142858).

The Pulse implant connects everyone to the internet, records their memories, and makes the Panopticon inevitable. Through the lives of two people growing up in London after the barrier protecting the city from floods and storm surges has been bombed by terrorists, readers see both the benefits of and the opposition to the Pulse. Moremi, whose mother died in the flood, enthusiastically adopted the Pulse. When she learns of an experimental treatment involving specially designed dreams, she leaps at the opportunity. Meanwhile, Orpheus, raised off-grid, was brought back from the dead after a gunshot wound and now works designing dreams for the Panopticon. Moremi and Orpheus' paths collide in a manufactured dream, and a whirlwind romance follows. The Panopticon claims to be able to predict crimes, and they see something coming—something Orpheus' father was instrumental in developing. As the vote on total adoption of the Pulse approaches, tension increases in an unnervingly believable struggle for the future. The story of Moremi and Orpheus has classical antecedents but with a satisfying eye for the future. —*Regina Schroeder*

Perilous Times.

By Thomas D. Lee.

May 2023. 496p. Ballantine, $28.99 (9780593499016); e-book (9780593499023).

Full of dark humor and insights into the ills of the twenty-first century, Lee's latest hits close to home by asking readers to reflect on how King Arthur would save modern-day England if it were plagued by rampant racism and political infighting as well as the devastating effects of climate change. When Kay, a long-dead Knight of the Round Table, reincarnates unexpectedly, he knows that he must vanquish a dragon terrorizing the countryside. His quest to find it leads Kay to a resourceful social activist named Mariam and a reanimated Lancelot, who has a mission of his own. The three story lines intermingle, weaving in old magic, ferocious knights, a certain lady of the lake, plus other fan favorites like Merlin, Morgana, and King Arthur himself, brought back to save the world. The gravitas of the classic Arthurian Legend is thankfully absent in Lee's narrative, offering a fresh, irreverent perspective on the well-known myth and allowing readers to form

their own opinions on the efficacy of a long-dead king and his sword combating what ails our modern age. —*Judith Utz*

The Roamers.
By Francesco Verso.

May 2023. 272p. Flame Tree, paper, $16.95 (9781787588332); e-book (9781787588356).

Seasoned Italian sf author Verso challenges readers to imagine what could be possible if we abandoned our material ties and embraced nature. Rome has become a dystopian landscape, blanketed with urban blight, where corporations rule and everyday life is a trudge. After a horrible accident at work, Miriam's son Alan is paralyzed from the waist down. Miriam's persistent efforts to heal her son lead her to the nanite formula, which enhances the human body and regenerates cells while removing the need for eating. Soon, Alan is on the mend, and Verso introduces several story arcs, beginning with the formation of the pulldogs, a group of misfits who reject the status quo and attempt to live as off the grid as possible. The nanite formula gives hope to Nicolas, who's spent his adult life overweight and would love nothing more than to never eat again, as his story line overtakes Alan's. Watching Verso's characters undergo metamorphosis as the plot jumps can be a bit jarring but is also imminently satisfying. —*Carrie Rasak*

The Sword Defiant.
By Gareth Hanrahan.

May 2023. 608p. Orbit, paper, $18.99 (9780316537155); e-book (9780316537308).

Informed of a rising darkness that threatens Necrad, Aelfric returns there and is nearly killed by a witch elf. He is sent to the northern provinces to counsel Earl Duna and discovers

that the witch elf, Ildorae, has infiltrated Castle Duna. Aelfric captures and interrogates her and learns that nothing is as it seems. When he encounters a being called Death who intends to destroy Necrad, Aelfric flees back to Necrad to inform the council. Aelfric leads the league army to the shores of Lake Bavduin for a parley that ends in disaster before he is saved by Ildorae. In the meantime, Aelfric's sister searches for her son, who has run off. After several adventures she finds herself in Necrad, and Aelfric agrees to help her find her son. In the tradition of Tolkien and Eddings, with a richly detailed narrative, well-drawn characters, epic battles, and political and religious intrigues, Hanrahan's outstanding first outing in the Lands of the Firstborn series will thrill fantasy readers—who will anxiously await the next book. —*John Faria*

A Thousand Recipes for Revenge.
By Beth Cato.

June 2023. 436p. Amazon/47North, $16.99 (9781662510281); e-book (9781662510298).

On the evening of her official betrothal to Prince Rupert, young Braizian princess Solenn's tongue awakens. She's an empathic Chef, a person with food-based magical powers, and she has to keep it a secret. There's just one problem: she can sense the poison in her fiancé's wine, and if she can't expose the killer, she'll be the main suspect. Meanwhile, Ada, a defector from the army on the run, tries to unspool a plot aimed at killing her and her former comrades and turning them to stone. Their story lines begin to intertwine as the full extent of this world's gods and magic comes to light. Cato's writing can fall into overexposition, and the metaphorical ethics behind cannibalism and veganism can be heavy-handed. But the characters and action of *A Thousand Recipes for Revenge* are exciting and compelling. Cato has a gift for plot twists and suspense that bring the cast of characters and their world to vivid life and make it difficult to put her book down. The ending will have readers craving a sequel. —*Leah von Essen*

YA: *Young readers will love the fast pace, the asexuality representation, and Solenn, the bold young protagonist. LvE.*

To Shape a Dragon's Breath.
By Moniquill Blackgoose.

May 2023. 528p. Del Rey, paper, $18 (9780593498286); e-book (9780593498293).

The people on the island of Masquapaug haven't seen a native dragon since long before the Anglish arrived with dragoneers and gunpowder, colonizing their land. When Anequs, 15, bonds with a fresh hatchling named Kasaqua, she is forced to go to an Anglish dragoneer school and is thrown into a completely different, restricting culture that is suspicious of her and her people at every turn. If she can't prove that she can be a competent dragoneer despite her "nackie" upbringing and outspoken ways, they'll execute her dragon, and the already low tolerance of indigenous communities could turn into outright attacks. This is a classic fantasy at its finest, in which a young, underestimated outcast is introduced to a magical boarding school and all the friendships, drama, prejudice, and romance that immersion entails. The indigenous quest to maintain culture and identity within a paralyzingly restrictive imperialism determined to stamp out natives and their beliefs, and Anequs' stubborn will to remain herself, create a fresh take on this setup and make this a must-read high-fantasy series. Blackgoose's focus on how storytelling and myth influence our culture and worldviews is also compelling. The relationships are exciting, the queer and polyamorous representation appealing, and it's easy to fall hard for Anequs, her world, and her love for her dragon. —*Leah von Essen*

YA: *Young readers will love this coming-of-age fantasy series with fresh queer representation and strong Indigenous inspiration. LvE.*

Whalefall.
By Daniel Kraus.

Aug. 2023. 336p. MTV, $27.99 (9781665918169); e-book (9781665918183).

Prolific, best-selling Kraus presents a moving character study disguised as a riveting, cinematic survival thriller. Jay is a high-school senior dealing not only with the loss of his

local-hero and diving-legend father, Mitt, but also his unresolved anger with their complicated relationship. In an attempt to bring some peace to his mother and sisters, Jay attempts a dangerous solo dive that is cut short when he is swallowed by a whale. The story is told from Jay's point of view in short, alternating chapters set in the present, denoted by how much air is left in his tank, and the past, mostly between 2015 and 2021, allowing readers to immediately fall into the story. The pacing is relentless, the awe astounding, and the tension palpably constricting, even as Kraus takes time to provide necessary details both scientific and visceral. However, it is Jay's constant growth throughout the story that makes this novel shine, allowing its beauty to emerge and leave its mark on all who encounter it. An easy sell to fans of ocean horror like *Pressure* (2016), by Brian Keene, or harrowing survival stories like *127 Hours* (2004), by Aron Ralston, but also to those who love the wonder, disgust, and heartfelt emotions found in Eric LaRocca's work. —*Becky Spratford*

YA: *Kraus has many YA fans, and with a 17-year-old protagonist, high-stakes adventure, and complicated parent-child relationship, this has wide teen appeal. BS.*

The Will of the Many.
By James Islington.

May 2023. 688p. Saga, $29.99 (9781982141172); e-book (9781982141196).

In the republic, the Hierarchy rules every facet of life. Taking will from others is a kind of currency in this society; the more people one takes from, the higher the rank. Vis Telimus is not what he appears. Already an outsider because he's an orphan, he does not ever give or take will. His fate might soon be changing as he is adopted by a high-ranking man with the intention of sending him to an elite academy for his own ends. This suits Vis, as his purpose is to solve a murder and find a mythical weapon, so he goes along with it. Because of societal rules, so much is out of the control of the characters, and this is just one of many fascinating pieces of the world that Islington (*The Shadow of What Was Lost*, 2016) has created. It is fascinating to see Vis and the other characters navigate these rules and restrictions to accomplish their own ends. Readers that love watching a world slowly unfold with lots of political intrigue will thoroughly enjoy this book. —*Emily Whitmore*

Art from *Playing It Safe.*

Blow Up.
By Ellen Crosby.

May 2023. 240p. Severn, $31.99 (9781448308033); e-book (9781448308040).

In the third series entry, photojournalist Sophie Medina continues to search for the truth about the death of her CIA agent husband, not believing the official version. During a jog, Sophie and her friend Jack find Supreme Court Justice Everett Townsend close to death and call for help. Complicating matters, her young friend Javi is missing, possibly on the run, and a woman attempts to blackmail Sophie's family, claiming she was married to Sophie's famous photographer grandfather and they never obtained a divorce. Sophie works to unravel her grandfather's past and searches for Javi, whose disappearance is connected to the attack on Townsend, and she ultimately learns facts about her husband she would rather not have known. As she uncovers evidence of a conspiracy, her studio is ransacked and she is shot at, but she perseveres, doggedly pursuing the truth. Sophie is a principled, smart, well-drawn character in a fast-paced story with multiple plot lines, framed by details of homelessness, DC politics, and photography. —*Sue O'Brien*

Blueberry Blunder.
By Amanda Flower.

May 2023. 304p. Kensington, (9781496734631); e-book (9781496734648).

Co-owner of Swissmen Sweets in Harvest, Ohio, Bailey King fires her general contractor, Wade Farmer, who for weeks has not made any progress on the construction of her new candy factory. Wade is furious and threatens Bailey, and she becomes the chief suspect when Wade is found dead at the factory. However, the sheriff soon turns his attention to her cousin Charlotte's Amish father when it is determined his rifle fired the fatal shot. Even though Charlotte is being shunned by her family due to her leaving the Amish faith, she assists Bailey with her investigation to clear her father. It turns out Bailey wasn't the only one having business troubles with Wade. During Bailey's investigation she must dodge television producer Devon Cruz, who is supposed to be filming the candy company construction but keeps worming her way into the investigation. Enlivened by the antics of Jethro, the miniature pig, this satisfying cozy with its details of candy making, the eighth in Flower's Amish Candy Shop series, also illuminates small-town life through its lovingly described setting and well-defined characters. —*Sue O'Brien*

Central Park West.
By James Comey.

June 2023. 384p. Mysterious, $30 (9781613164037); e-book (9781613164044).

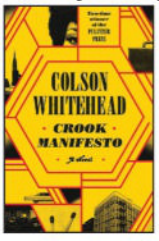
This book is sure to get a lot of attention, considering the notoriety of its author, but regardless of what potential readers might think about the former FBI director, one thing is sure: his debut novel is a fine thriller. Nora Carleton is a federal prosecutor. She's close to putting a New York City organized crime boss behind bars, but a seemingly unconnected crime, the murder of a former governor, threatens to blow up her case. As she desperately tries to rebuild, she uncovers corruption and conspiracy at the highest levels of her profession. Comey, a former federal prosecutor before the FBI gig, certainly knows the world he's writing about, but readers might be surprised by his skills as a novelist. This isn't one of those books that's "pretty good for a guy who isn't a real writer." It's very well executed: the characters are richly detailed, the dialogue is impressively realistic, and the plot is genuinely suspenseful. Two more titles are planned in the series, and for once in the world of celebrity-authored thrillers, that's not a bad thing. —*David Pitt*

HDI **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Readers who deign to take a look only for the Comey name are likely to be surprised—in a good way.

Crook Manifesto.
By Colson Whitehead.

July 2023. 336p. Doubleday, $30 (9780385545150); e-book (9780385545167).

Harlem furniture-store owner, family man, and sometimes crook Ray Carney had been keeping it clean. But in 1971, when his daughter begs for tickets to see the Jackson Five, Carney contacts a dirty cop and gets dragged back into the violent underworld. Whitehead continues the ensnaring, ingenious, mordantly funny, and profoundly revelatory crime saga begun in *Harlem Shuffle* (2021), digging even deeper into the city's corruption, from gang wars to a battle between rival fried-chicken restaurants to alliances among politicians, insurance companies, fixers, and arsonists in the grand racket known as urban renewal.



Carney's archly cynical narration alternates with the blunt yet philosophical musings of his cohort Pepper, who tries to abide by his "crook manifesto." Then there's Zippo, shooting scenes for his Blaxploitation flick, *Code Name: Nefertiti*, at Carney's store and stirring up more trouble. Directing a spectacularly vivid cast that includes motley criminals and Carney's rock-steady wife and sweet kids and nephew, Whitehead tracks various strategies for survival in a city engulfed in fiery chaos. Culminating in 1976, this saturated tale is laced with caustic commentary on everything from the paradoxes Black artists face to the ludicrous commercialization of the Bicentennial. Whitehead captures the menace and the beauty of the city in exhilarating detail within the many-faceted, rollicking plot that propels his second, magnificently vibrant and transcendent Ray Carney novel. —*Donna Seaman*

HDI **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Readers will hunt for any new book by Whitehead, but the latest in his Harlem saga will be sought with particular zeal.

Cutting Teeth.
By Chandler Baker.

July 2023. 320p. Flatiron, $27.99 (9781250839787).

Baker's plot is complex and gripping, featuring a brutal murder and an eye-opening look at suburban motherhood and the competition among the moms to be "the best," someone who would do anything for her kids. When Miss Ollie, who teaches the four-year-olds at Little Academy, is found stabbed to death in her classroom with a set of tiny footprints in the blood around her body, no one knows what to think. A four-year-old as killer sounds ludicrous, except that most of the kids in the class are victims of Renfield's syndrome, an obsession with drinking blood. The doctors say it's just a phase, but when the kids bite their parents hard enough to draw the blood they crave, or suck on disgusting things, it's hard to ignore. Darby, Mary Beth, and Rhea are all secretly terrified their child is the killer, but the truth turns out to be horrifying, tragic, and shocking. Dark secrets, retribution, and the lengths a mother will go to to protect her child all feature in this twisted, disturbing story that will keep readers off balance from beginning to end. —*Emily Melton*

A Disappearance in Fiji.
By Nilima Rao.

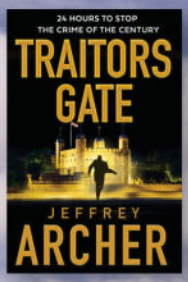
June 2023. 288p. Soho, $25.95 (9781641294294); e-book (9781641294300).

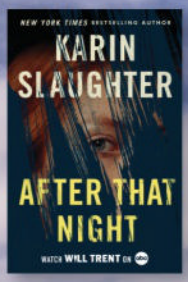
This debut novel by a Fijian Indian Australian delivers both an absorbing mystery and a scathing indictment of the cruelties inflicted on indentured servants from India working on the sugar plantations in Fiji in 1914. Rao's detective, Indian Police Sergeant Akal Singh, demoted from his post in Hong Kong to Fiji six months earlier, is assigned to the case of a young woman who

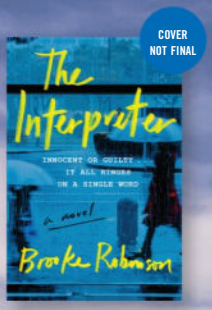
HarperCollinsPublishers

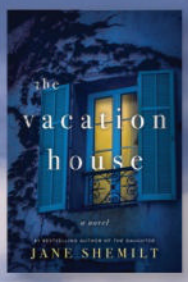
PRESENTS

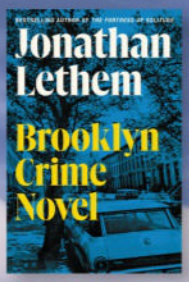
MYSTERY

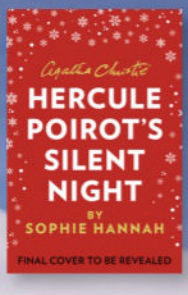


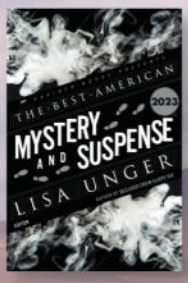


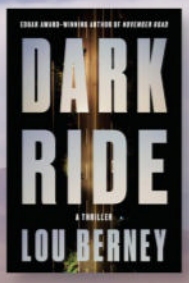


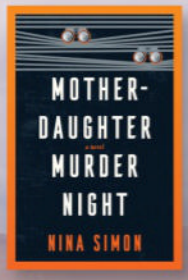


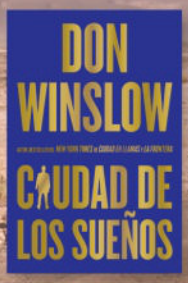


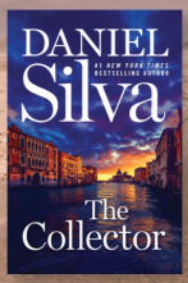


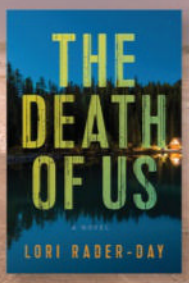


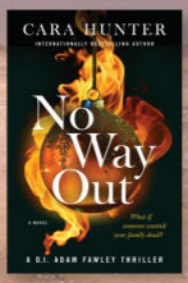




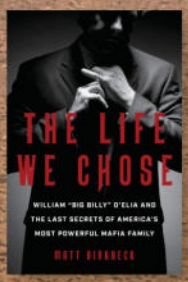


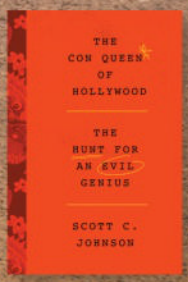


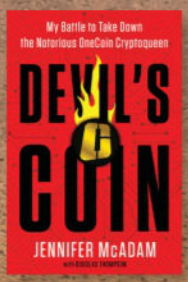


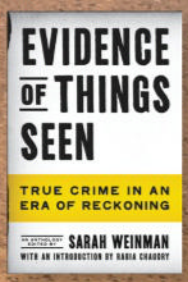


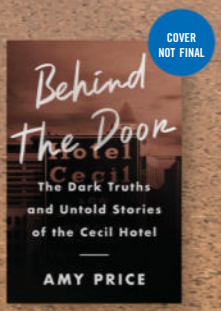
TRUE CRIME

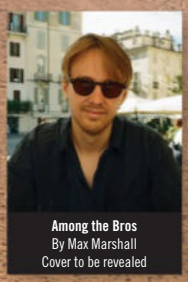












Among the Bros
By Max Marshall
Cover to be revealed

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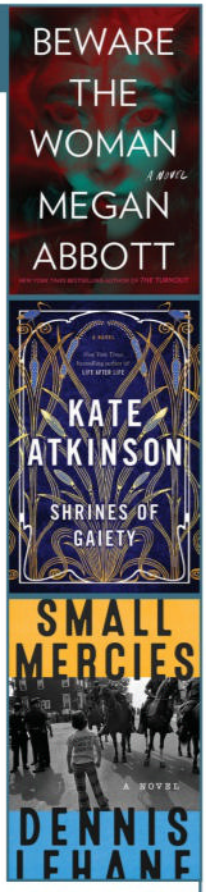
Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers



This year's top 10 mysteries and thrillers include titles that tackle disturbing contemporary social issues and others that use history to reflect on themes that still resonate today. The titles on this list were reviewed in *Booklist* from May 1, 2022, through May 15, 2023. —*Bill Ott*

After the Lights Go Out. By John Vercher. 2022. Soho, $26 (9781641293310).

In the tragic tale of mixed-race MMA fighter Xavier Wallace, Vercher delivers a compelling look at a brutal and crime-ridden sport and an unflinching portrait of the ravages of dementia.

All the Dangerous Things. Stacy Willingham. 2023. Minotaur, $27.99 (9781250803856).

Isabelle Drake hopes to mobilize the true-crime community's armchair detectives to find her son, Mason, who was abducted from his bedroom a year earlier. A superb mix of true-crime tropes and domestic suspense.

Anywhere You Run. Wanda M. Morris. 2022. Morrow, $17.99 (9780063082502).

Morris brings the summer of 1964 in Jackson, Mississippi, to vivid life in this stunning novel about two Black sisters on the run, one victimized by an egregious crime and both guilty of simply wanting better lives for themselves.

Beware the Woman. Megan Abbott. 2023. Putnam, $28.95 (9780593084939).

Displaying her stunning ability to mix domestic suspense with much darker fare, Abbott sends pregnant teacher Jacy on a road trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where she meets her husband's family and quickly suspects something is terribly amiss.

Everybody Knows. By Jordan Harper. 2023. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $28 (9780316457910).

Harper leaves the country noir of *She Rides Shotgun* (2017) for this utterly compelling, contemporary take on Nathanael West's nightmare vision of L.A.—a promised land fueled by unfulfilled promises.

How I'll Kill You. By Ren DeStefano. 2023. Berkley, $27 (9780593438305).

This deceptive thriller begins as a chilling, dispassionate chronicle of murderous triplets devoted to their chosen craft and to one another, but it evolves into a twisted love story as competing loyalties surface.

Murder under a Red Moon. 2023. By Harini Nagendra. Pegasus, $26.95 (9781639363704).

Newly married Kaveri Murthy solves crimes under the restrictive rule of the British Raj. Here, Kaveri's Detectives Club, composed of women from all levels of society, investigates a murder. Splendid amateur sleuthing.

On the Savage Side. By Tiffany McDaniel. 2023. Knopf, $29 (9780593320716).

Inspired by the unsolved murders of the Chillicothe Six, and with roots in the author's Cherokee heritage, McDaniel's powerful thriller crosses genres to tell a deeply moving story of women and their ability to endure.

Shrines of Gaiety. By Kate Atkinson. 2022. Doubleday, $29 (9780385547970).

Atkinson focuses her brilliant re-creation of 1920s London on Nellie Corker, the self-made queen of the city's club scene, who has just returned from prison to find her empire threatened from within and without.

Small Mercies. By Dennis Lehane. 2023. Harper, $28.99 (9780062129482).

One sweltering night In Boston's Southie neighborhood in 1974, Mary Pat Fennessy's daughter disappears, and a young Black man is killed in the subway. Lehane's masterful historical thriller evokes the racism of the time in a complex, multidimensional tragedy.

went missing from a sugar plantation. A crusading priest insists she was kidnapped; the British inspector general wants Singh to do only the most cursory investigation, aimed both at containing journalists interested in the story and at quieting the priest, who has launched a campaign against the misrule of the plantations. Singh's examination of the plantation from which the girl disappeared reveals abysmal conditions. Just about every dealing Singh has with the British is loaded with casual racism. It's fascinating to watch Singh's uphill struggle to learn what happened to the young woman; the way he is thwarted at every turn speaks volumes about colonial rule. An insightful, determined main character, the unearthing of the wrongs of indentured servitude, and a compelling plot make this a promising start to a new series. Fans of Harini Nagendra's *The Bangalore Detectives Club* (2022), also about the wrongs inflicted under British colonialism, should love this mystery. —*Connie Fletcher*

The Dissident.
By Paul Goldberg.

June 2023. 432p. Farrar, $28 (9781250208590); e-book (9781250208569).

Goldberg's genre-defying thriller mixes political reflections, historical perspectives, philosophical musings, and the author's personal take on the culture and society of Russia, where he lived until he was 14. Set in 1976, when the Cold War still raged and the U.S. planned a historical visit to Moscow by Henry Kissinger to meet Leonid Brezhnev, the story features Viktor, an engineer turned refusenik, and his wife, Oksana. Both are desperate to escape Russia and resettle in Israel, but in the current climate, that seems impossible. When Viktor stumbles on a brutal murder—a dissident and an American diplomat axed to death—he decides not to report it, fearing he'll be blamed. But things turn more complicated when a "curator" for the KGB offers Viktor and Oksana the chance to leave Russia if they can solve the murders before Kissinger's visit. In a plot that's as quirky, disjointed, and complex as it is mesmerizing, eclectic, and intriguing, Goldberg, who harbors mixed feelings about Russia, offers vivid characters, informative insights into history, language, culture, and politics, and a sad but convincing ending. Not an easy read, but a unique one. —*Emily Melton*

Everyone Here Is Lying.
By Shari Lapena.

July 2023. 352p. Viking/Pamela Dorman, $29 (9780593489932); e-book (9780593489949).

Married neighbors William and Nora are having a torrid affair. They desperately want to be together, but Nora realizes the impact it would have on their families and elects to end things. This sets off a chain of events that snowballs into tragedy. Distraught at Nora's decision, William goes home, only to find that his daughter, Avery, is in trouble again—she's been kicked out of choir and has walked

home by herself, something the nine-year-old isn't allowed to do. She's also insolent, and when she sasses William, he hits her. He flees in a panic, and Avery decides to get even. She disappears, but an anonymous tip reveals that Avery was seen getting into the car of a teenage neighbor with a record for drug abuse—that neighbor is Nora's son. The reader knows what's really happened—a distressing story of a woman obsessed, a kid who's the archetypal evil child, and two families ripped apart by the disastrous chain of events. As usual, Lapena offers a clever, disturbing page-turner with deeply flawed characters and a stunning conclusion. —*Emily Melton*

The Good Ones.
By Polly Stewart.

June 2023. 304p. Harper, $30 (9780063234154); e-book (9780063234178).

When her mother dies, 37-year-old Nicola returns to her small Appalachian hometown to sell the family house. The place is rife with memories, foremost among them that of the mysterious disappearance 16 years earlier of her friend Lauren. Now, Nicola finds herself in a relationship with Warren, Lauren's bereft husband, and working as a teacher for Warren's younger brother, Sean, principal of the local high school with whom she had had an ambiguous relationship when they were teens. Emotional and other complications ensue, the only constants being Lauren's continuing absence and the speculation that she's dead, perhaps murdered; speaking of which, Nicola is now in danger herself, for she begins receiving threatening notes written in blood-red ink, saying, "No one wants you here." Told in Nicola's first-person voice, Stewart's rather slow-paced story is not without its moments of welcome suspense and it will attract and engage the ever-increasing audience for domestic suspense. —*Michael Cart*

An Honest Man.
By Michael Koryta.

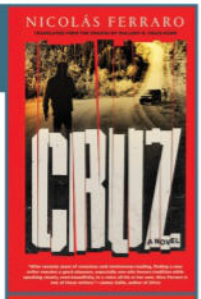
July 2023. 384p. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $29 (9780316535946); e-book (9780316430234).

When Israel Pike is paroled from prison, he returns to the place he's least welcome, tiny Salvation Point Island. After all, who would trust a man who killed his own father? Israel

is driven to root out the evil that he's seen there, backed by an informant deal he made with the state police. Unfortunately, that deal falls short when Israel discovers seven bodies, two of them rival Senate hopefuls, in an unmoored yacht. Meanwhile, 12-year-old Lyman seeks refuge from his father's alcohol-fueled beatings and finds that a terrified, wounded, hatchet-wielding woman has occupied his hideout. Lyman doesn't know where she came from, but he knows her fear too well, and vows to hide her from the "bad

Continued on p.32

Top 10 Debut Mysteries & Thrillers



Our favorite debut mysteries and thrillers reviewed in *Booklist* over the past 12 months are tangible proof that today's first-timers are not only sticking with what's hot right now—domestic suspense and psychological thrillers—but are also trying their hands at reinvigorating some genre staples, from classic noir through old-school adventure. —*Bill Ott*

Cruz. By Nicholás Ferraro. Tr. by Mallory N. Craig-Kuhn. 2022. Soho, $27.95 (9781641293969).

Ferraro strips the gangland novel to its gruesome core, portraying a crushingly bleak hellscape where "hope and torture are the same word." Unremittingly violent, but written with unabashed realism, breathtaking power, and a narrative ferocity that never lets up.

Dirt Creek. By Hayley Scrivenor. 2022. Flatiron, $27.99 (9781250834768).

This brilliantly crafted debut tracks the disappearance of a high-school student in rural Australia. The gut-wrenching tale moves back and forward in time and is brimming with mind-bending surprises.

The Gatekeeper. By James Byrne. 2022, Minotaur, $27.99 (9781250805768).

This cleverly written thriller about a retired mercenary who foils assassination attempts and busts open conspiracies is everything fans of over-the-top adventure love. In a subgenre packed with burly, think-on-your-feet heroes, Dez Murphy is something new and fresh.

An Honest Living. By Dwyer Murphy. 2022. Viking, $26 (9780593489253).

Murphy traces the peregrinations around Manhattan and Brooklyn of an "odd-job lawyer" who takes the case of a woman who believes her father is stealing her rare books. A bibliophile's delight.

Jackal. By Erin E. Adams. 2022. Bantam, $27 (9780593499306).

For more than 30 years, Black girls in the primarily white town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, have been disappearing on the first day of summer. Until Haitian American Liz Rocher decides to battle the town's racism and the jackal in the woods.

Murder on the Spanish Seas. By Wendy Church. 2022. Polis, $26.99 (9781951709853).

Jesse O'Hara reluctantly agrees to join her girlfriend on a luxury cruise around the Iberian Peninsula. What's not to like, except maybe a backpack full of explosives, drug smugglers, engine sabotage, and a dead body?

A Quiet Teacher. By Adam Oyebanji. 2022. Severn, $29.99 (9781448309429).

Imagine John le Carré and Agatha Christie collaborating on a bizarre but thoroughly engrossing blend of prep-school mystery and spy thriller. It all works because Oyebanji has created a knockout lead: Greg Abimbola, a Black language teacher and former covert operative.

Shutter. Ramona Emerson. 2022. Soho, $25.95 (9781641293334).

Forensic photographer Rita Todaches has long straddled the worlds between the living and the dead—until the spirit of a presumed suicide appears, insisting she was murdered.

Tell Us No Secrets. By Siena Sterling. 2022. Morrow, $16.99 (9780063161801).

Four teen girls at a Massachusetts boarding school create a list on which they and their friends rate their first sexual experiences. That's when the trouble starts.

The Whalebone Theatre. By Joanna Quinn. 2022. Knopf, $29 (9780593321706).

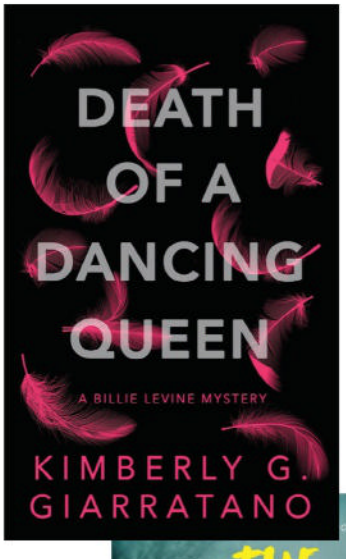
From a production of *The Iliad* staged within the salvaged ribs of a beached whale to undercover exploits during WWII, Quinn's enchanting debut delivers both adventure and suspense.

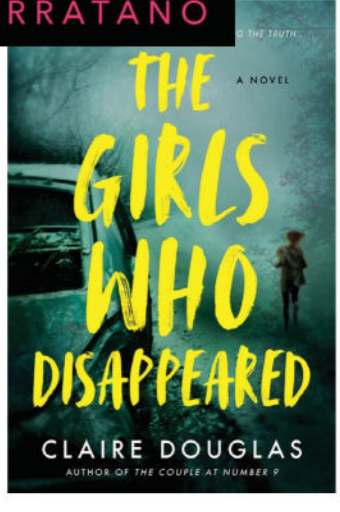
Art from *The Lost Girls.*

Booklist Trend Alert

Podcasters in Crime Fiction

by Bill Ott





The sleuths of yesterday could be spotted by their trench coats and fedoras. Nowadays, it's iPhones and selfie sticks, and it was inevitable that the world of true-crime podcasts would insinuate its way into crime fiction. This list brings together a sampling of the many thrillers and procedurals over the last few years that have featured podcasters or podcast devotees. It used to be a little tricky to keep coming up with believable reasons why sleuths would bother taking the time to dig into cold cases when the warmer ones offered better rewards. Cold cases, on the other hand, are podcasters' bread and butter. It's a marriage made by clicking the record button.

Confidence. By Denise Mina. 2022. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $28 (9780316242721).

True-crime podcasters Ana McDonald and Finn Cohen are digging into the connection between a missing urban explorer and the re-emergence of a coveted Christian relic. But have they landed in the middle of a Schrodinger's Cat conundrum? And is the cat alive or dead or both?

Dark Circles. By Caite Dolan-Leach. 2022. Ballantine, $28 (9780593356050).

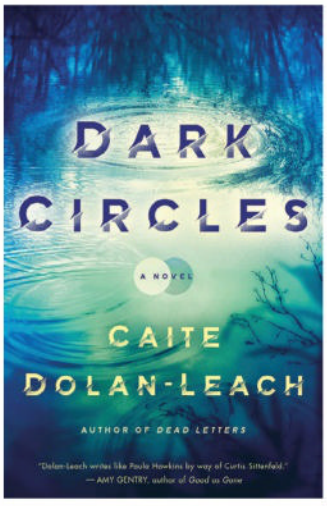
TV star Liv and friend Ava, both detoxing at a New Age retreat, start a true-crime podcast to determine how four women at the retreat died. If you love *Only Murders in the Building,* you won't be able to resist this one.

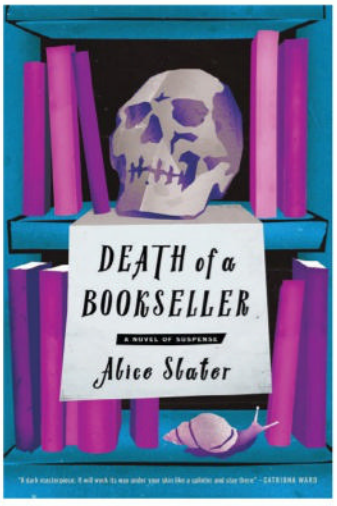
Death of a Bookseller. By Alice Slater. 2023. Penzler/Scarlet, $26.95 (9781613163771).

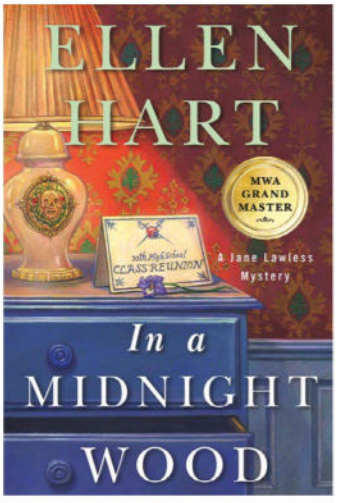
Brogan, a bookseller and true-crime junkie whose favorite podcast is *The Murder Girls,* becomes dangerously obsessed with a new employee. A whip-smart, slow-burn suspense novel.

Death of a Dancing Queen. By Kimberley G. Giarratano. 2023. Datura, $15.99 (9781915202512).

Unlicensed PI Billie Levine investigates the disappearance of a student, stripper, and crime-podcast host. Naturally, that leads to a juicy cold case deep in the past. Perfect for fans of Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum.







The Girl Who Disappeared. By Claire Douglas. 2023. Harper, $17.99 (9780063296695).

Investigative reporter Jenna Halliday is assigned to create content for a podcast about a 20-year-old cold case involving the disappearance of four teens. Was the supernatural involved?

I Know You Know. By Gilly Macmillan. 2018. Morrow, $26.99 (9780062698605).

A friend of two boys who were killed years before starts a podcast aimed at showing that the mentally challenged man convicted of the crime is innocent. A chilling procedural enlivened by the podcast frame.

In a Midnight Wood. By Ellen Hart. 2020. Minotaur, $26.99 (9781250308443).

Twin Cities restaurant owner Jane Lawless gets fodder for her true-crime podcast when she learns that the body of a long-missing teen has been found buried in the graveyard of a small town.

The Lost Girls. By Jessica Chiarella. 2021. Putnam, $17 (9780593191101).

Podcaster Marti Reese still believes her sister, missing for 20 years, is alive, and Ava Vreeland remains convinced her brother is innocent of murder. The podcast brings the two women together, and they share obsessions in a single-minded search for answers.

The Night Swim. By Megan Goldin. 2020. St. Martin's, $27.99 (9781250219688).

Popular podcast-host Rachel Krall is covering a headline-grabbing trial involving a champion swimmer accused of date rape when listeners ask her to examine a 25-year-old supposedly accidental drowning of another young woman.

Art from *Confidence*.

Read-alikes
Bibliophile Thrillers
by Bill Ott

Art from *By Its Cover.*

In Andrew Cartmel's *Paperback Sleuth,* reviewed opposite, Cordelia Stanmer cares only for vintage paperbacks, but the sleuths in the bibliophile thrillers below covet rare books of all varieties, and their passions lead them into all manner of capers. Paralleling the tone of Cartwel's gritty but delightfully witty story, we've limited the field here to thrillers and hard-boiled fare, leaving out the many cozy mysteries starring booksellers and librarians, a category that could fill several more columns.

The Burglar in the Library. By Lawrence Block. 1997. Dutton, $23.95 (9780525943013).

Thief and Greenwich Village bookseller Bernie Rhodenbarr is on a busman's holiday—a charming weekend at an Upstate New York B&B—but his real reason for being there is to steal a first edition of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (not just any first edition but one inscribed to Dashiell Hammett). Delightfully, Bernie sets off to steal a hard-boiled novel and winds up the hero in an English country house mystery.

By Its Cover. By Donna Leon. 2014. Atlantic Monthly, $26 (9780802122643).

The premise of this delicious Guido Brunetti novel involves the theft and mutilation of rare books from a private research library, and much of the action takes place in the library itself, with Brunetti inhaling the aroma of aging parchment and fondly remembering his student days. Amid all this biblio-love, there's a murder, too, but it's hard not to pay more attention to the books.

Ex-Libris. By Ross King. 2001. Penguin, $16 (9780142000809).

King's engrossing literary thriller, set in 1660s London, concerns bookseller Isaac Inchbold's attempts to recover a rare book stolen from the collection of a mysterious woman. Sparkling with intrigue and adventure, the novel offers a heady mix of literature, politics, philosophy, and, of course, very rare books.

Havana Fever. By Leonard Padura. Tr. by Peter Bush. 2004. Bitter Lemon, $14.95 (9781904738367).

Mario Conde, retired from the Havana police and making a precarious living as an antiquarian book dealer, stumbles on a motherload of rarities in the crumbling mansion of a brother and sister forced to sell their books to pay for food. The books lead to a bolero singer and a closet stuffed with guilt, jealousy, and stifled rage.

An Honest Living. By Dwyer Murphy. 2022. Viking, $26 (9780593489253).

Murphy's debut tracks the meanderings through Manhattan and Brooklyn of an "odd-job lawyer" working for a woman who believes her father is stealing her rare books. It's a gig from heaven for our book-loving hero, not to mention anyone who covets "reading in a bar with lousy lighting and good air conditioning."

The Sign of the Book. By John Dunning. 2004. Scribner, $25 (9780743255059).

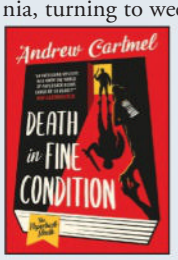
Hard-boiled Denver bookseller Cliff Janeway journeys to remote Paradise, California, to help a lawyer prepare a case. What he finds in the accused's library is a treasure trove of signed first editions. Tasty morsels of bibliophile gold (like the fact that it's nearly impossible to find a first edition of the novel on which the movie *Laura* was based) are nicely wrapped in an intriguing crime plot and plenty of snappy patter.

Continued from p.29

men." Israel's power-hungry uncle, the island's only cop, tries to pin the yacht murders on him, and his deal with the state police turns out to be less bulletproof than he'd thought, forcing Israel to unmask the island's trafficking ring sooner rather than later. Koryta, a regular on awards lists, rewards readers with his trademark shadowy mood and perfectly calibrated suspense in this stand-alone. They'll also find haunting symbolism, expert character development, and realistically imperfect redemption arcs as the author plays the sea's healing gifts and dangers against those of Salvation Point to make this Koryta's best yet. —*Christine Tran*

The Paperback Sleuth: Death in Fine Condition.
By Andrew Cartmel.
June 2023. 336p. Titan, paper, $16.95 (9781789098945).

Cartmel puts a devilishly clever spin on his Vinyl Detective series about a guy who hunts for rare LPs and expands his circle of London vintage fanatics by introducing Cordelia, whose ardor for valuable crime paperbacks induces her to take audacious risks. Young, smart, and tough, Cordelia has parlayed her hardcore drug-addiction into bibliomania, turning to weed and custom-made porn for kicks. It's



her dealer, the seemingly prim Mrs. Chichester, who inadvertently sets Cordelia on the path to becoming the Paperback Sleuth as the perfect foil for selling stolen loot. This connection also brings Cordelia a bit closer to her crush, gorgeous Agatha, another crime-paperback fanatic who appeared in Cartmel's former series. Piercingly observant, acidly funny, and covertly vicious, Cordelia mocks her fuddy-duddy landlord, Edwin, until her epic hubris puts her life in danger and he reveals his true nature. Cartmel delights in rhapsodizing over the gorgeously "lurid" cover art of the most coveted vintage crime novels, name-dropping such real-life artists as James Bama, while tightly constructing a richly suspenseful plot fueled by shock and awe over Cordelia's crazy confidence. Readers will be primed for more. —*Donna Seaman*

Impervious.
By Laurie Buchanan.
May 2023. 312p. SparkPress, paper, $17.95 (9781684631940); e-book (9781684631957).

Buchanan has shown she can concoct a spicy ragout out of some unlikely ingredients—witness last year's *Iconoclast*—and she's done it again. Readers who tear into the opening chapter might think they've stumbled into a cozy to a factor of four. The setting is a writers retreat with a gourmet kitchen, and much is made of "wild sockeye salmon drizzled with serrano aioli." There's so much more that one hopes a corpse turns up soon. It does, and with grim conviction Buchanan morphs her novel into another genre, the hard-boiled crime story. This one is striking because it's led by a dirty cop who happens to be a woman. Readers will have to decide if mix-

ing grape tomatoes, sage, and coriander with exploding heads is their cuppa, but Buchanan makes it easy to get with the program. Like the reporter who lurks inside most novelists, she's bursting to tell us stuff. Did you know Hemingway contributed a booze recipe to a 1935 drinks book called *So Red the Nose*? And a gathering of alligators is called a "congregation"? —*Don Crinklaw*

In a Hard Wind.
By David Housewright.

June 2023. 320p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250863584); e-book (9781250863591).

When the bulk of the evidence points to his client's guilt, what's an unlicensed private investigator to do? Well, if you're Rushmore McKenzie, a former St. Paul, Minnesota, cop, you just keep digging. Here's the setup: a friend asks McKenzie to take on the case of a woman who's been accused of killing a man. In their small community, the general feeling seems to be that she could have, and probably did, do the deed; she did, after all, threaten him publicly. But McKenzie is guided largely by instinct, and his gut tells him the woman is innocent. Problem is, it's going to be awfully hard to prove that. This is the twentieth McKenzie novel, and while a lot of series have started running out of steam by this point, Housewright and Rushmore show no signs of slowing down. The writing is as crisp as ever, and Rushmore continues to be the kind of guy you wouldn't mind hanging out with (unless you've done something wrong, in which case he will nail you to the wall). Keep 'em coming! —*David Pitt*

The Isolated Séance.
By Jeri Westerson.

June 2023. 224p. Severn, $31.99 (9781448310746); e-book (9781448310753).

Veering from whimsical humor to dark violence, Westerson imagines one of Sherlock Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars as a grown-up, eager to escape his troubled background and follow in his idol Holmes' footsteps by becoming a private detective. Tim Badger hires a man named Ben Watson to be his Watson and opens his office in one of London's dingiest slums. The detectives' first client is Thomas Brent, who's been accused of murdering his employer, Quinn. Shortly after the duo agree to take Brent's case, they receive a happy shock—Holmes gives them a posh new office and lodgings, money for new clothes, and even a housekeeper. With this helpful leg up, the fledgling detectives are confident they can find out who killed Quinn. But the case is much more complex than they expected, even with occasional help from Holmes. When they do eventually crack it through Holmes-style deduction, they learn a difficult lesson: life can be unfair and doesn't always turn out the way one might expect. Westerson is an imaginative storyteller who brings history, humor, hubris, and humanity to this inventive mystery. —*Emily Melton*

Killingly.
By Katharine Beutner.

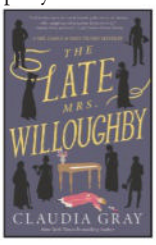
June 2023. 360p. Soho, $27.95 (9781641294379); e-book (9781641294386).

The title here refers to the town of Killingly near Mount Holyoke College. It also hints at how women at all levels of society in the nineteenth century were treated throughout their lives—"killingly." The basis for this mystery is an actual cold case: Bertha Lane Mellish, a star Mount Holyoke student and the daughter of a minister from Killingly, Connecticut, disappeared from her dormitory in November 1897. Beutner keeps the reader guessing until the end as to whether Bertha escaped an impossible situation at college, was murdered, or died by suicide. The tension is maintained throughout by Beutner's unflinching exposé of just how repressive it was for all women of the time, even for the privileged, well-bred students at Mount Holyoke. Here, the strong-willed Bertha and her best friend, Agnes, yearn for more than being a helpmate to a missionary or a minister (the usual path, we learn, for Mount Holyoke students of the time). Atmospheric and disturbing. —*Connie Fletcher*

The Late Mrs. Willoughby.
By Claudia Gray.

May 2023. 400p. Vintage, paper, $17 (9780593313831); e-book (9780593313848).

In *The Murder of Mr. Wickham* (2022), Gray recreated Jane Austen's world, bringing her most famous characters together for a house party where Mr. Wickham met his demise.



Young Jonathan Darcy and Juliet Tilney took on the roles of detectives to solve the case, but had little reason to suspect their investigative talents would be called upon again. Yet here they are, in Devonshire. Darcy is visiting an old schoolmate, Willoughby, and Juliet is staying with Colonel and Marianne Brandon when, as the title indicates, Willoughby's wealthy wife dies by poisoning. Let the whodunit begin! But this tale involves more than suspects, false leads, and dead ends in a country setting. Gray captures the rhythms and cadences of Austen's books, while infusing the characters with a freshness that is modern but never seems out of place, including placing Darcy on the autism spectrum and highlighting Juliet's eagerness to step out of traditional roles, and at the same time continuing to be mindful of them. The supporting cast, as well, is fully fashioned (and often quite amusing), adding a rich layer of frosting on this tasty cake. Austen fans will adore this, of course, but with Darcy and Juliet center stage, even those with only a passing acquaintance with her works will enjoy Gray's latest. —*Ilene Cooper*

The Magistrate.
By Brian Klingborg.

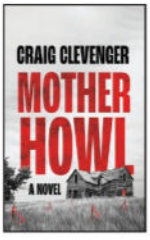
May 2023. 320p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250855015); e-book (9781250855022).

The Inspector Lu Fei mysteries (*Thief of Souls,* 2021, and *Wild Prey,* 2022), set in a remote region of northeast China, blend police procedural with searing indictments of corrupt practices by the current Chinese Communist Party. This time the main focus is on how party members profit from the sex trafficking of young Korean women, who are lured to China with promises of good jobs and then forced into no-way-out lives of prostitution. Klingborg makes this startlingly real for readers by showing two young Korean women, imprisoned in a tiny room, working as cybersex workers. The women's plight connects to a series of street attacks on businessmen and a badly burned body found near an expressway—all the victims are left with a note from "The Magistrate." Although Lu Fei's character isn't as well drawn as in previous entries, the issues raised here are alarming, and readers will appreciate the ingenuity of Lu Fei's team in uncovering a vigilante plot and the larger scheme to keep sex trafficking going. —*Connie Fletcher*

Mother Howl.
By Craig Clevenger.

June 2023. 300p. Datura, paper, $17.99 (9781915523037); e-book (9781915523105).

When Lyle was a teenager, his father confessed to murdering nine women. Lyle and his



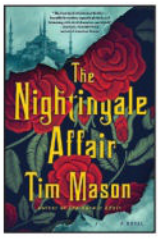
mother were excoriated by the community; Lyle's mother withdrew, but Lyle, after numerous vicious beatings by haters, decided to flee. Being underage, he couldn't get a new identity legally, so he bought a forged one. Ever since, he's lived in fear of being discovered. His life is a mess. He struggles to hold a job, is arrested on a fake drug charge, spends time in prison, and builds up massive debts. Then he meets Sera; they fall in love, marry, and have a child, but even this may not be enough to save him. Alongside Lyle's story is that of Icarus, an alien being sent to Earth from his home among the stars by Mother Howl—a sort of divine, omniscient being—on an undefined mission. Given his weird appearance and actions once he lands on Earth, Icarus is taken for a homeless madman and sent to a mental hospital. Eager to complete his still-unknown mission and return to his distant home, Icarus escapes the hospital, and, in a shattering climax, his mission and Lyle's world collide. Dubbed "neo-noir," Clevenger's book is brilliant, original, and genre defying, veering from the mundane to the truly bizarre and from dark hopelessness to strangely hopeful. —*Emily Melton*

The Nightingale Affair.
By Tim Mason.

May 2023. 400p. Algonquin, $28 (9781643750392); e-book (9781643755106).

Former Metropolitan Police Inspector Field revisits a life-changing case after an MP's wife's murder bears the signature of a killer Field thought he'd left in Crimea. Twelve

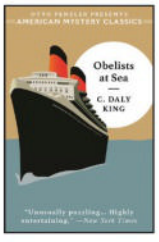
years earlier, Field hunted a serial killer who stalked Florence Nightingale's nurses in Scutari and left a rose-embroidered cloth sewn over his victims' mouths. Nightingale and Field's future wife, Jane, survived, but Field solved the case to his own satisfaction only after his suspect committed suicide. Now, in 1867 London, victims adorned with the rose-embroidered cloth are turning up, and Field must determine if he let the killer escape Scutari. It's no easy task: Field is operating outside of the Met as a private detective, but his friend, Inspector Sam Llewellyn, helps bridge the gap. As Field connects the London victims to the volatile suffrage movement, the killer targets Field's family and Nightingale. Mason crafts evocative settings in Crimea and London, deftly weaving in a remarkable number of period hallmarks (including appearances by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and John Stuart Mill). In Field (introduced in *The Darwin Affair,* 2019), readers will find a detective whose humility, unflinching observations, and pragmatic take on rules are bound to charm. Mason's second Field thriller is a deep, gritty dive into Victorian London that's perfect for fans of Alex Grecian's Scotland Yard's Murder Squad series and Caleb Carr's *The Alienist*. —*Christine Tran*



Obelists at Sea.
By C. Daly King.

May 2023. 288p. Penzler/American Mystery Classics, $25.95 (9781613164150); e-book, $15.95 (9781613164174).

In this ingenious puzzle, first published in 1932 and now reissued in Otto Penzler's American Mystery Classics series, two murders occur within minutes of each other in a crowded room on a luxury ocean liner bound for Paris from New York. During an auction in the smoking room of the ship, the lights go off, a shot rings out, and a millionaire is found dead, with his bidding rival holding a gun. During the blackout, a pearl necklace is snatched from a beautiful young woman's throat; she later dies, with a scratch on her throat the only evidence. Both murders grow more and more puzzling, even with the smoking gun. Author and psychologist King explains "obelist" as "one who harbors suspicions," as in the four psychologists from different specialties on board who try to solve the murders but are, comically, pretty much "at sea." Luckily, two detectives are also on board. A satisfyingly complex solution to both crimes; sometimes brilliant and sometimes hilarious applications from psychology; and a "clue-finder" at mystery's end—all of this makes for a delightful Golden Age return. With an engrossing introduction by novelist-critic Martin Edwards, who also edits the British Library's Crime Classics series. —*Connie Fletcher*



The Only One Left.
By Riley Sager.

June 2023. 400p. Dutton, $28.95 (9780593183229).

The author of *Home before Dark* (2020) and *Survive the Night* (2021) goes full-on Gothic in this tale of an in-home nurse who's hired to take care of a wheelchair-bound woman. But this is no typical patient: the woman is Lenora Hope, who, according to public opinion, slaughtered her family six decades ago. Her new caregiver, Kit McDeere, also believes her client is guilty until Lenora begins to reveal secrets she's kept nearly all her life. After a slight misstep with last year's *The House across the Lake,* in which the supernatural elements didn't quite work, Sager is back on form here. The writing is compelling, the story captivating, and the characters nicely rendered. The novel is set in the early 1980s, but it has a timeless feel: it could have taken place a century ago, or it could be happening today. Claustrophobic and haunting, this is Sager at the top of his game. —*David Pitt*

Paper Cuts.
By Ellery Adams.

May 2023. 304p. Kensington, $27 (9781496726476).

The sixth entry in the Secret, Book, and Scone Society series features bookstore owner Nora Pennington, whose past catches up with her when the former wife and the child of Nora's ex-husband, Lawrence, come to town. Kelly is dying of cancer, and Tucker, her neurodiverse son, will be left with his aunt and uncle, new residents of Miracle Springs, North Carolina, since Lawrence wants little to do with the boy. They hope that the valuable books left to Tucker will provide for him. But when Kelly is murdered and the books are stolen, the most likely suspect is Nora. This has all the cozy frame elements—a charming setting, strong friendships, and plenty of scrumptious sweets—but Adams also creates a layered mystery that provides both backstory for Nora as well as a smart whodunit plot that will keep readers guessing. It also doesn't shy away from examining real emotions. Lawrence left Nora to be with the pregnant Kelly, leaving Nora with still-raw feelings that are examined honestly. Newcomers to the series can dive right in, and fans will gobble up every detail. —*Ilene Cooper*

Playing It Safe.
By Ashley Weaver.

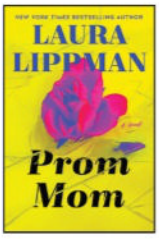
May 2023. 272p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250885876); e-book (9781250885883).

Electra McDonnell was completely happy working in the family business of breaking and entering into wealthy homes and cracking open their safes until WWII arrived, and with it, a handsome British intelligence officer, Major Ramsey, who gave Electra the option of serving time or serving England by using her talents to crack open Nazi secrets. Electra's latest adventure, the third in Weaver's standout series, starts with a wonderfully detailed account of daily life during the first month of the Blitz in 1940. Ramsey appears with Electra's latest assignment, giving her only a train ticket to the port city of Sunderland, the address of a boarding house there, and a book titled *The Birds of Northern England*. Once in Sunderland, Electra witnesses the sudden death of a man in the street, a death that the major believes may be murder. Electra believes this death may be connected to the sensitive war work the other lodgers in Electra's boarding house are engaged in. The mystery expands to include Sunderland's shipyards, the secrets of Nazi spies that may be housed there, and the realization that someone is stalking the investigators. As usual, lots of twists and turns, and heart-stopping descriptions of break-ins, along with the comic romantic tension between Major Ramsey and Electra. —*Connie Fletcher*

Prom Mom.
By Laura Lippman.

July 2023. 320p. Morrow, $30 (9780062998064); e-book (9780062998088).

Amber Glass is yet another compelling female character brought to life by Lippman. In 1997, Amber was "Prom Mom," an honor student who delivered and killed her baby on prom night. She has lived her life in hiding, struggling to get by, but in September 2019, she returns home to Baltimore to open an art gallery. Ironically, her area of expertise is prison artists. What are the odds she will run into Joe Simpson, her "Cad Dad" prom date? She paid a heavy price for her "crime" while he went on to become a successful real-estate investor, married to an accomplished plastic surgeon, living in a big house and enjoying the Range Rover lifestyle. However, Joe walks back into Amber's life almost immediately, and the ensuing cat-and-mouse game (or is it cats and mice?) is presented from all sides. A cast of extremely self-absorbed characters drive the ominous narrative, which becomes even more fraught with anxiety when Lippman masterfully brings the COVID-19 shutdown into the plot. The head-spinning conclusion will not disappoint. In her acknowledgments, Lippman calls this novel "a very long prequel" to James M. Cain's noir classic *Double Indemnity,* just as her 2018 novel *Sunburn* offered homage to *The Postman Always Rings Twice.* Absolutely brilliant. —*Jane Murphy*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Buzz starts early for any new Lippman book, and this one already has the cicadas in high gear.

The Puzzle Master.
By Danielle Trussoni.

June 2023. 384p. Random, $27 (9780593595299); e-book (9780593595305).

The new novel from the author of *The Ancestor* (2020) is a surefire hit for fans of puzzles of a linguistic or mathematical nature. Mike

Brink is a puzzle creator; in the world of puzzles, he's a superstar. When a psychiatrist asks Mike to consult on a case involving one of her patients, a woman who's serving a life sentence in prison for murder, he's reluctant, but the psychiatrist's reason for reaching out to him—an elegant and seemingly impenetrable puzzle drawn by the inmate—makes him unable to say no. And so he's plunged into a mystery that reaches back to the thirteenth century (the author uses a real person, Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia, as the jumping-off point), and its ripples can still be felt today. This is an ambitious story, expertly told. Comparisons to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* are perhaps on point, but it must be noted that Trussoni is a much better writer than Brown, and this book is altogether more satisfying than Brown's best-seller. A sequel, *The Puzzle Box,* is in the works, and it can't come soon enough. —*David Pitt*

The Quiet Tenant.
By Clémence Michallon.

June 2023. 320p. Knopf, $28 (9780593534649); e-book (9780593534656).

In this dark, taut thriller, a woman is kidnapped and held captive for five years. Chained in a shed, abused, starved, and raped by her captor, the woman (whose name is only revealed at the end) can hardly remember her life "before." Then one day, her kidnapper tells her they're leaving. His wife died five years ago, his daughter is now a teenager, and they're heading to a new home for a fresh start. He tells the woman that she'll pose as a friend who needs a place to stay. She will eat with the man and his daughter, but during the day, when they're at school and work, she'll be chained to the radiator in her room. Stunned, she can hardly believe her luck and hopes the move might allow her to escape, but even when she has chances, she can't bring herself to leave. Then she finds evidence that she's not her captor's first victim, but she's the only one he's allowed to live. Nightmarish, nerve-jangling, and horrifying, this one is not for the fainthearted, but it's an explosive, utterly gripping read. —*Emily Melton*

The Siberia Job.
By Josh Haven.

June 2023. 384p. Mysterious, $26.95 (9781613164075); e-book (9781613164082).

Russia, 1994. Two men, a Czech and an American, decide to get rich by capitalizing on the chaos in Russia following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Czech, Petr Kovac, already amassed a fortune in his home country, and the American, John Mills, is an investment banker with big dreams. Together they have the ambition and the skills to make a big score. Their partners, the Russian Mafia, might be a little hard to handle, and Petr might be a little distracted by an unexpected romantic entanglement, but surely their plan is too foolproof to fail. Amazingly, Haven's second caper novel (after 2022's *Fake Money, Blue Smoke*) is based on a true story; sure, he's taken some liberties, and the actual events weren't as lighthearted as some of the things going on in the book, but the core of the story is grounded in reality. Haven, who also writes nautical fiction under his real name, J. H. Gelernter, is a terrific storyteller. While not as laugh-out-loud funny as, say, a Donald E. Westlake comic caper novel, *The Siberia Job* is very entertaining and completely satisfying. —*David Pitt*

Strange Sally Diamond.
By Liz Nugent.

July 2023. 320p. Scout, $27.99 (9781501189715); e-book (9781501189739).

When Sally's father tells her to put him out with the trash when he dies, she takes him literally. Now she's the center of attention and can't understand why. Sally has always been strange and reclusive, but now she is forced to live on her own, become part of society, and learn to make friends. While going through her father's belongings, she discovers more questions than answers about her own past. After she receives messages from a stranger claiming to know everything about her, Sally's life is thrown into a downward spiral. The plot is slow-moving but involving, and Sally is endearing and likable. The concept that "it takes a village to raise a child" is a driving force behind Sally's growth and provides a welcome bright spot in the darkness. Nugent writes relatable, imperfect characters, and her portrayal of Sally's neurodivergence allows a look into the struggles of daily life that most take for granted. This well-written, engaging novel isn't for the light of heart, but it will find a home with readers who thrive on intricate plotlines and character development. —*Carmen Clark*

What the Neighbors Saw.
By Melissa Adelman.

June 2023. 304p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250876560); e-book (9781250876577).

Appearances can be deceiving! In Adelman's domestic suspense debut, Alexis and Sam are ready to move their growing family into the house of their dreams. When a fixer-upper in an exclusive Washington, DC, neighborhood comes on the market, they jump at the opportunity to own a house that will finally elevate them to an elite social status. However, their neighbors are not as perfect as they seem. Behind closed doors, everyone is hiding secrets. When a neighbor is found dead, Alexis is determined to uncover the murderer. She befriends the neighbor's widow, Blair, and together they alternate narrating a story of secrets, lies, and deception. In this slow-burn thriller, Adelman explores themes of racism, infidelity, and abuse. When the truth is revealed, Alexis and Blair will be forced to make a difficult choice that will determine their future. It ends with a killer twist that will surely get readers talking! This book will likely appeal to those who enjoy domestic suspense novels such as those by Megan Miranda, Chandler Baker, and Sally Hepworth. —*Jayme Oldham*

The Woman Inside.
By M. T. Edvardsson. Tr. by Rachel Willson-Broyles.

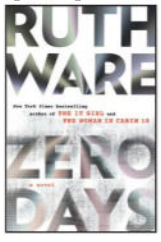
June 2023. 384p. Macmillan/Celadon, $28.99 (9781250204622); e-book (9781250204608).

In Stockholm's university district, disastrous choices draw a struggling single father, a law student, and a directionless psychic hotline counselor into a double murder. Bill Olsson, an unemployed gambling addict, struggles to raise his young daughter alone. His boarder, Karla, dreams that a law degree will pull her out of the chaos in her drug-addicted mother's orbit. And Jennica counsels callers to her psychic hotline to stick up for themselves, while determinedly explaining away signs that her new boyfriend, Stephen Rytter, is hiding something. Rytter's secret, his invalid heiress wife, Regina, begs her housecleaner, Karla, to keep her company. When Karla realizes that Stephen has been debilitating his wife with sedatives, she and Bill seize the opportunity to free his daughter from impending poverty. Unfortunately, their bungling blackmail plot leaves Stephen and Regina dead, and they must match wits with Stockholm's finest to escape arrest. Through Bill's, Karla's, and Jennica's voices, alienation, self-preservation, and hope propel the story toward calamity with unrelenting suspense; highly recommended for fans of psychological thrillers. —*Christine Tran*

Zero Days.
By Ruth Ware.

June 2023. 368p. Scout, $29.99 (9781982155292); e-book (9781982155315).

Ware's latest thriller will not disappoint, different as it is from some of her earlier books. Jack (Jacintha) and her husband Gabe are "pen" (penetration) testers, hired by companies to check their computer security and ensure that they are hack-proof. Jack does the actual breaking and entering of the clients' offices, while Gabe handles the tech end of their "invasions" from their London house. In a failed assignment, she gets caught and arrested. When she eventually returns home, Jack finds that Gabe has been murdered while working at his computer. She becomes the prime suspect for a number of well-plotted reasons, and after being taken into custody, the resourceful Jack escapes from the police station armed only with a Sharpie. On the run and injured in the ensuing pursuit, she tries to put together the pieces of her husband's murder as her cell phone drains and her wound worsens. She's a latter-day Dr. Richard Kimble. A fugitive. The action and tension are relentless from the opening to the conclusion, which will astonish, but certainly not dismay, readers, who will be captivated by this very original and very real protagonist. It has been said that in Ruth Ware's books the pages just turn themselves. She has been heralded as "the new Agatha Christie" for good reason. —*Jane Murphy*



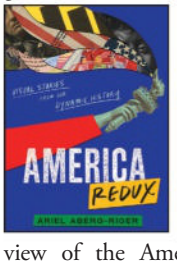
Older Readers

America Redux: Visual Stories from Our Dynamic History.

By Ariel Aberg-Riger. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 304p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, $24.99 (9780063057531). Gr. 9–12. 973.

In this interactive, visually stunning compilation, Aberg-Riger assembles some of the stories U.S. history textbooks typically leave out. Iconic American catchphrases and myths give titles to 21 thematic chapters. "Traditional Family Values," for example, begins with the Kansas Free Fair of 1920, which showcased livestock, washing machines, and Ferris wheels—in addition to holding best-families contests in the eugenics building. A candid overview of the American eugenics movement follows, highlighting how it targeted women of color and in poverty, especially through illegal sterilizations. Chunked into short, poignant sections, the text reverberates with such staggering facts as an estimated one quarter to one half of all Native women were sterilized in the 1970s. Whether the author is focusing on the displacement of communities to build the country's highways, government seizures of land, or the history of women's right to vote, she centers her discussions on the events' effects on marginalized people and makes connections between familiar stories and often-untold truths. The zine-like format adds to the impact, delivering each history lesson in collages filled with cleverly selected archival photos and images. While the themes encompass difficult topics, Aberg-Riger concludes many chapters with ways activists have changed and continue to change the course of these ongoing issues in America. An essential resource to promote richer perspectives and dialogue around American identity. —*Angela Leeper*



Middle Readers

The Best Way to Get Your Way.

By Tanya Lloyd Kyi. Illus. by Chanelle Nibbelink.

May 2023. 56p. Kids Can, $18.99 (9781525305481). Gr. 3–6. 808.53.

In this debate primer, Kyi takes five topics that typically cause household conflict—chores, screen time, eating vegetables, bedtime, and homework—and uses them as the basis for developing formal pro and con arguments. In each case, two fictional children represent a debate team and offer opening statements to explain their case, back up their arguments with facts and statistics, and provide rebuttals and closing arguments. The sections are segmented to make it clear which part of the debate is being presented. In between some sections, boxed text introduces related debate terms and strategies, such as causation versus correlation, fallacy, and citation of reliable sources, while vibrant digital art gives this informational book a lighter tone. A prompt at the end of each debate includes guided questions to help students decide whether they are pro or con on the issues. A concluding section describes more debate basics (common debate schedules, what judges look for) and poses more debate topics. This useful resource encourages active listening and respectful discourse—valuable skill sets at any age. —*Angela Leeper*

A Child's Introduction to Pride: The Inspirational History and Culture of the LGBTQIA+ Community.

By Sarah Prager. Illus. by Caitlin O'Dwyer.

May 2023. 96p. Black Dog & Leventhal, $21.99 (9780762481910). Gr. 5–8. 306.76.

Prager (*Kind like Marsha,* 2022) has done a heroic job of crafting this crowded survey/history of LGBTQIA+ culture and community. After the useful introduction, Prager segues into a historic survey that begins with "The Precolonial World," quickly establishing her structural strategy; i.e., addressing a highly selective group of issues in a paragraph or two. Finishing an overview of LGBTQIA+ history in this fashion, she turns her attention to a section called "LGBTQIA+ Contributions to the World," highlighting areas in music, dance, literature, the arts, and the sciences. These contributions are brief and somewhat eccentric; for example, four are selected to epitomize—in a single paragraph each—LGBTQIA+ additions to music (*Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, *West Side Story*, "America the Beautiful," and *Switched-On Bach*). More history in additional sections follows, along with glances at famous LGBTQIA+ people. The book is greatly enhanced by the many full-color illustrations by O'Dwyer. They help make this an agreeable introduction to a valuable subject. —*Michael Cart*

City of Neighbors.

By Andrea Curtis. Illus. by Katy Dockrill.

May 2023. 40p. Groundwood, $19.99 (9781773068169). Gr. 4–7. 307.

Following up their study of urban infrastructure in *City of Water* (2021), Curtis and Dockrill survey ways urban neighborhoods around the world have fostered stronger feelings of community. Taking a positive approach, Curtis focuses on success stories: a street in Lisbon that saw an economic revival after being painted pink, a playground in Tokyo made entirely of ingeniously repurposed tires, floating mini-docks in Izmir, Turkey, and waterside hammocks in Halifax that have proved popular spots for hanging out. Exhorting readers to look for ways to boost their own communities from "all right to AWE-mazing," the author suggests other types of projects, from sponsoring street art or music to creating green spaces or temporary "pop up parks." The illustrator matches the upbeat tone of the narrative with street scenes featuring groups of residents and visitors casually lounging on, strolling past, or otherwise enjoying the results of these many types of "placemaking" initiatives. Readers inspired to undertake some local urban renewal of their own will find a helpful checklist and lists of resources at the end. —*John Peters*

Evolution under Pressure: How We Change Nature and How Nature Changes Us.

By Yolanda Ridge. Illus. by Dane Thibeault.

May 2023. 124p. Annick, $21.99 (9781773217512); paper, $14.99 (9781773217529). Gr. 4–7. 304.2.

This accessible offering tackles evolution and natural selection through case studies of four representative animals. Introductory material asserts that out of the countless number of species on Earth, only humans live pretty much anywhere they want to by changing natural habitats, and the ensuing text emphasizes adaptations resulting from human actions. Chapters describe how these evolutionary changes came about (due to poachers, many rhinos are now born without horns; the desire for pink, pretty, pleasant pigs led to the domestication of wild boars; Industrial Revolution soot inspired peppered moths to mutate to black coloring; city-dwelling lizards have super sticky toe pads that provide better grip on brick and glass surfaces), offer solutions and alternative behaviors, and highlight an individual or organization making a difference for positive change. Pages are filled with graphics, illustrations, and sidebars; back matter includes a lengthy list of resources. The sample situations will resonate with kids, the tone is informative but not overly alarmist, and the messages about ecological stewardship go down nice and easy. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Gender Identity for Kids: A Book about Finding Yourself, Understanding Others, and Respecting Everybody!

By Andy Passchier. Illus. by the author.

June 2023. 96p. Little, Brown, $15.99 (9780316411226). Gr. 2–5. 305.3.

This is a handy book to have around when a child (or an adult, for that matter) starts asking questions about sexual identity or gender roles. Definitions and descriptions are provided in straightforward, easy-to-understand language, and concepts are supported by cheerful cartoon characters, comparison charts, checklists, and other helpful graphics. The tone is consistently inclusive and reassuring, and the text uses scenarios that most kids will relate to and that are grounded in everyday examples and experiences. Each brief chapter ends with a list of open-ended questions that make good conversation prompts, and there are other helpful features: activities to help kids explore their feelings about their gender, things to consider before making important decisions (like coming out), how to stand up to bullying, and how to find support (including an extensive bibli-

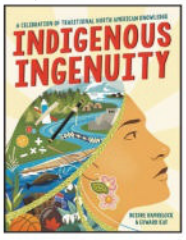
ography of picture books, titles for tweens and teens, workbooks, and resources for adults supporting gender-fluid kids). The final message is that everyone has the right to be accepted for who they are. This helpful guide makes that easier. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Indigenous Ingenuity: A Celebration of Traditional North American Knowledge.

By Deidre Havrelock and Edward Kay. Illus. by Kalila Fuller.

May 2023. 272p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $20.99 (9780316413336). Gr. 4–8. 500.89.

When Europeans arrived in North America, they encountered cultures very different from their own and made racist assumptions that let them presume they had free reign over the land. Havrelock and Kay detail numerous innovations used by precontact Indigenous groups that were equal to (and in some cases superior to) European technology of the time. Following an introduction to Turtle Island, Indigenous worldviews, and traditional knowledge, individual chapters detail inventions in land management, transportation, communication, food technology, health sciences, textiles, architecture, hunting, mathematics, and the arts. A final chapter notes contemporary projects employing traditional ecological knowledge to create a sustainable future. Examples range from cultural burning (which ensures healthy ecosystems but was banned by the U.S. government) to coastal fish traps and weirs to brain surgery (successfully performed by Aztecs and Mayans). The authors describe these developments in the context of STEM and Western science; simple activities and process descriptions are also included along with some recipes. Black-and-white art includes archival photos, drawings, inset captions, mechanical drawings, and illustrative charts. Lists of "Cultural Areas and Peoples Referenced," contemporary Indigenous science organizations, and source notes are appended. Engaging and informative, this will be welcomed by both STEM and social studies curricula to help to correct prevailing narratives about Indigenous technology. —*Kay Weisman*



Lucille Ball Had No Eyebrows?

By Dan Gutman. Illus. by Allison Steinfeld.

May 2023. 112p. Norton/Young Readers, $16.95 (9781324030720); paper, $6.95 (9781324030737). Gr. 3–5. 791.45.

Continuing a series designed to give younger readers the dishier celebrity biographies they (purportedly) crave, Gutman goes for what he calls the "*good* stuff" about Lucille Ball, beginning with her descent from an accused Salem witch and (possibly) George Washington. On the way to a closing claim that the garbage cans in the cemetery where she is buried are all labeled "I Love Lucy," he trots in Desi Arnaz and the kids—but also her imaginary childhood friends Sassafrassa and Madeline the Cowgirl, other celebrities with the same birthday, and career highlights ranging from failing a casting-sheet audition for a "Lucille Ball type" to an "appearance" on *The Simpsons*. Framed as exchanges of facts and jokes between modern sibs "Paige" and "Turner" and interspersed for further ease of digestion with both inspirational quotes and monochrome portraits and vignettes from Steinfeld, this introduction to TV's first millionaire counts as required reading for anyone interested in television's formative years or, for that matter, anyone who thinks only men could do physical comedy. —*John Peters*

Nomads: Life on the Move.

By Kinchoi Lam. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 82p. Cicada, $22.99 (9781800660328). Gr. 2–6. 394.

This detail-filled work offers absorbing leisure reading and a springboard for reports (though there are no notes, further reading, or bibliography). Lam, who says he was inspired to write this book upon seeing Saharan nomads, offers in his foreword a wider inspiration: "It is important to look to cultures that are more in tune with the environment . . . instead of controlling it." How nomads are affected by climate change and other threats imposed by settled communities is a theme explored as it relates to each of seven cultures, following a broad description of nomadic life: Mongolian nomads, Tuaregs (Sahara), Nenets (Siberia), Roma (Europe and the Americas), Maasai (eastern Africa), Sama-Bajau (seafarers off the coasts of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia), and the Yanomami (Amazon rain forest). Each profile covers the group's dwellings, food, clothing, and practices and objects distinctive to the culture in question. Soft, expressive watercolors show people in traditional dress, and spot art features items that are important to the culture. While it's fascinating, the lack of back matter, except a glossary, makes it an additional purchase. —*Henrietta Verma*

Nothing Could Stop Her: The Courageous Life of Ruth Gruber.

By Rona Arato. Illus. by Isabel Muñoz.

May 2023. 120p. Lerner/Kar-Ben, $18.99 (9781728445618); paper, $8.99 (9781728445625). Gr. 3–6. 070.433.

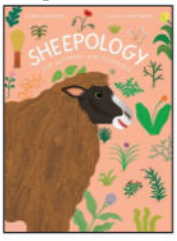
This biography of Ruth Gruber, a Jewish American journalist and human rights activist, does a very effective job of creating an insightful profile of a courageous woman who lived through some of the most turbulent periods of the twentieth century. Gruber was born in 1911 and was finishing her PhD in Nazi Germany right on the cusp of Hitler's rise to power (at the time, 20-year-old Gruber was briefly famous for being the youngest person ever to achieve a doctorate). She began her literary career by writing newspaper stories about diverse Brooklyn neighborhoods as a rebuttal to rising antisemitism. Stints in Soviet Union gulags and Alaska followed, and her empathetic reporting prompted a request from the U.S. government for her help in relocating war refugees, including concentration camp survivors. The book ends at this point, but an author's note fills in the rest of Gruber's amazing 70-year career. Helpful sidebars provide historic context, and back matter includes a time line, glossary, notes, and bibliography. This is an apt tribute to an inspiring Jewish role model. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Sheepology: The Ultimate Encyclopedia.

By Ilaria Demonti. Illus. by Camilla Pintonato.

2023. 80p. Princeton Architectural, $19.99 (9781797222431). Gr. 2–4. 636.3.

Welcome to the wonderful, woolly world of sheep! Like the charming *Chickenology* (2021) and *Pigology* (2021) before it, *Sheepology* may not quite be the ultimate encyclopedia that it claims to be, but it is decidedly chockablock with knowledge and humor. The book first informs readers on basic sheep attributes, history, and geography before diving into more detailed subjects. There are featured shepherds from around the world, entertaining anecdotes about sheep intelligence, and even a mention of Dolly, the controversial clone. Readers are treated to sheep biology lessons, cultural references, and cheese-making within the same few pages, and the book even touches on the necessary preparations that any would-be sheep farmer needs to take before acquiring their own flock. This Italian import is equally informative and entertaining, working as both a straight read-through and as a resource to dip in and out of. Chatty tidbits of text are broken up into bright boxes for easy digestion, and each spread seems to have a different format, all the better to keep readers engaged and guessing at what comes next. The cheerful, cartoonish illustrations adeptly convey serious information (a cross-section of sheep anatomy) as well as funny asides (an Alpine breed pictured in full hiking gear), and the variety of sheep expressions are incredibly appealing. Sure to encourage a new flock of sheep devotees. —*Emily Graham*

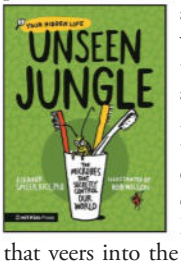


Unseen Jungle: The Microbes That Secretly Control Our World.

By Eleanor Spicer Rice. Illus. by Rob Wilson.

May 2023. 176p. Candlewick/MIT Kids, $19.99 (9781536226461). Gr. 3–6. 579.17.

Developing the theme that "microbes impact our lives and our world in big, beautiful, and sometimes creepy ways," Spicer Rice explains the varied roles bacteria and other tiny guests play in digestion, decomposition, spreading or fighting diseases, and killing hosts or keeping them healthy. Readers who relish biology that veers into the "creepy" will be riveted by



the all-too-detailed pictures of parasitic wasp larvae eating caterpillars and ladybugs from the inside out, microbes "living their best lives" on the butts of cats and the faces of dog owners, and the answer to what happens to untreated rabies victims. On more positive notes, she also describes how male mosquitoes infected with *Wolbachia* germs will make infertile the eggs of uninfected malaria-carrying females with whom they mate. She also interviews several scientists, including an entomologist studying the way diseased monarch caterpillars can be cured by poop transplants from healthy ones (the technique's potential for humans goes unmentioned) and a public health veterinarian who suggests that contact with pets can help human infants develop a resistance to allergies. The illustrations are limited to cartoon spot art, but the author closes with substantial source notes and suggestions for further study of this fascinating topic. —*John Peters*

Young

1,001 Birds.

By Joanna Rzezak. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 32p. Thames & Hudson, $16.95 (9780500653241). K–Gr. 2. 598.

Swallows zip around a wetland and forest before heading out on their migration from Europe to Africa, encountering an incredible variety of other birds along the way. They swoop through marshlands and savannas, crossing deserts and seas. Enormous storks glide on currents, gannets dive, and tiny weavers spin enormous nests. Every page turn explores a different habitat, and the illustrations are pockmarked with short tidbits of information. A small redheaded swallow is hidden somewhere on each spread, giving readers a reason to examine every nook and cranny. This French import's colorful, stylized drawings teem with detail and give a sense of plumage and size, even with the somewhat cartoonish renderings. The mishmash of facts scattered about each page makes it easy to dip in and out, and it's sure to offer new tidbits upon each return examination. It concludes with a brief mention of man-made challenges that birds face but offers no concrete suggestions, and it lacks back matter. Still, avian enthusiasts will be delighted by the featherweight introduction to the wonderful world of birds. —*Emily Graham*

Granny Came Here on the Empire Windrush.

By Patrice Lawrence. Illus. by Camilla Sucre.

May 2023. 40p. Nosy Crow, $17.99 (9798887770338). K–Gr. 3. 941.

While learning about influential Black women throughout history, a young girl is captivated by an inspiring role model close to home. Ava is asked to dress up as someone she admires for a school assembly. Enlisting the help of her grandmother, the two look through Granny's vintage trunk. Keepsake treasures spark Granny's memories, and she shares her post-WWII experiences as a young woman leaving Trinidad and immigrating to Great Britain by herself. Rich with evocative and emotive details, the text recounts the long journey aboard the *Empire Windrush*, the harsh working conditions in a clothing factory, and the loneliness of missing home and family: "The cold wrapped itself around me and wouldn't let go." Sucre's illustrations effectively show the contrast between the warmth of Trinidadian "mountains glowing orange with immortelle blossoms" and the concrete-gray urban London, England, landscape. With newfound insight, Ava delivers a fitting tribute. This eloquent picture book shines a spotlight on the resilience and courage of the Afro-Caribbean *Windrush* generation. —*Linda Ludke*

Moving the Millers' Minnie Moore Mine Mansion: A True Story.

By Dave Eggers. Illus. by Júlia Sardà.

June 2023. 56p. Candlewick, $19.99 (9781536215885). Gr. 1–3. 979.6.

"Moving house" takes on an unusual meaning in this tale of a nineteenth century mansion that was transported four miles—

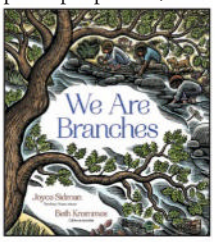
intact, with a family living inside—outside of an Idaho town in 1914. Substituting insistence that "This. Actually. Happened." for source citations, Eggers offers a mannered account of how the house came to be built near the Minnie Moore mine and how, when the town objected to having the owners raising pigs in the yard, it was shifted onto logs and rolled off to a new site. The main draw here is likely to be the pictures as, using a palette of sepia and earth tones, Sardà offers glimpses of expressively drawn horses, pigs, and people around stylized but architecturally exact views of a tall wood-frame house rising in its first location, standing through the years and changes in family fortunes, and being rolled in dignified elegance to its current spot by workers with major facial hair. Even if at least some of the finer details are invented, the episode has more than just local appeal. —*John Peters*

Once upon a Fairy Tale House: The True Story of Four Sisters and the Magic They Built.
By Mary Lyn Ray. Illus. by Giselle Potter.
May 2023. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, $18.99 (9781481479820). PreS–Gr. 2. 979.4.

Set in Santa Barbara in the early 1900s, this charming picture book is based on the true story of four sisters who grew up enjoying the magic of fairy tales. Vibrant double-page spreads depict the sisters engaging in activities at the beach (drawing, counting, building sandcastles) that hint at their later careers. As adults, the Moody sisters—Mildred, Harriet, Brenda, and Wilma—combine their professional skills as artist, architect, banker, and businessperson to construct pixie cottages inspired by the sense of wonder they experienced as children. The ink-and-watercolor illustrations echo the rosemaling Norwegian folk style favored by Mildred when she painted furniture. An author's note highlights how unusual it was for the sisters to enter professions that were dominated by men at the time. The author also describes personally meeting Mildred in 1989, when the only living sister was 93 years old. This wholesome story shows a strong bond between sisters and demonstrates how working as a team can turn imagination into reality. —*Michelle Young*

We Are Branches.
By Joyce Sidman. Illus. by Beth Krommes.
May 2023. 40p. Clarion, $19.99 (9780358538189). PreS–Gr. 3. 502.

In this follow-up to *Swirl by Swirl* (2011), author Sidman and Caldecott-winning illustrator Krommes team up again to introduce another beautiful—and useful—pattern in nature: branches. Beginning with tree limbs, the most obvious form of branches, poetic text and luminous scratchboard illustrations with refined watercolors explain the purpose of different branches from the branches' points of view. The tree imagery continues with roots and transitions to flower petals. Recognizing that branches are not solely plant properties, however, water takes prominence, progressing from streams to rivers that form branches to the ocean. Still more branches carve through nature, accompanied here by strong verbs, from lightning "splitting the sky with energy" to cracks that "splinter rock and mud" to snowflake crystals that "sprout in ice." A short lull in the text



("From small to big, / we repeat again and again") combines with double-page illustrations to emphasize fractals and the breadth of branches before transitioning yet again to a range of animals (including humans) and their branched antlers, legs, toes, arms, wings, and even circulatory systems. Labeled plants and animals and a variety of perspectives, such as Canada geese's aerial view of branching rivers, add pleasing elements, while concluding notes offer further information on how branches contribute to nature. This STEM concept book turns to STEAM through exquisite detail and design. —*Angela Leeper*

READ THE BOOK RENÉE WATSON CALLED,
"An essential book for every American home and classroom."

By Tameka Fryer Brown Illustrated by Nikkolas Smith

★ "A brave and deeply affecting story about friendship, perspective, anti-racism, and the importance of understanding history. This may be an essential book about a cultural flashpoint."
—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL (STARRED REVIEW)

"This is a prime example of how a picture book can help younger readers understand difficult topics. A thoughtful and age-appropriate exploration of a somber subject."
— KIRKUS REVIEWS

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Bright Minds Series. Scholastic/Children's Press. Gr. 3–5. (4 titles)

Charles Drew: The Innovator of the Blood Bank. By Aaron Talley. Illus. by Subi Bosa. 2023. 40p. lib. ed., $29 (9781338865349). 617.092.
George Washington Carver: More Than "The Peanut Man." By Janel Rodríguez. Illus. by Subi Bosa. 2023. 40p. lib. ed., $29 (9781338864205). 630.92.
Lewis Latimer: A Brilliant Inventor. By Janel Rodríguez. Illus. by Subi Bosa. 2023. 40p. lib. ed., $29 (9781338864175). 621.32.
Madam C. J. Walker: The Beauty Boss. By Janel Rodríguez. Illus. by Subi Bosa. 2023. 40p. lib. ed., $29 (9781338865318). 338.7.

Books in the Bright Minds series feature people of color who made noteworthy contributions to society. The writing is concise and straightforward. Visual elements include captioned, black-and-white photos, which can be rather small, as well as colorful digital designs and cartoon drawings with speech balloons, giving the pages a casual, somewhat-crowded look. *Charles Drew* introduces a Black doctor whose work studying blood and improving its processing, storage, and use at blood banks during the 1930s and '40s saved many lives, particularly during WWII. In *George Washington Carver*, readers will learn about Carver as a boy who loved plants, a botanist who taught farmers about crop rotation, and a gentle man who aspired to help others. *Lewis Latimer* tells of a man born in 1848 to former slaves. A draftsman and later an inventor, he worked with both Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison during the early years of electrical power. *Madam C. J. Walker* relates how the daughter of Black sharecroppers in Louisiana grew up to become a hair-care businesswoman, philanthropist, supporter of civil rights, and "the first self-made, female millionaire" in America. With accessible, relatively short texts and lively design elements, these biographies will find an audience among kids who are building their reading skills while learning about famous people from the past. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Life Cycles Series. The Child's World/Wonder. Gr. 2–4. (12 titles)

The Life Cycle of a Chicken. By Robin Merritt. 2023. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $34.21 (9781503858428); e-book, $55.64 (9781503867123). 636.
The Life Cycle of a Clown Fish. By L. L. Owens. 2023. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $34.21 (9781503858411); e-book, $55.64 (9781503867130). 597.
The Life Cycle of a Daisy. By L. L. Owens. 2023. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $34.21 (9781503858695); e-book, $55.64 (9781503867147). 583.
The Life Cycle of an Earthworm. By L. L. Owens. 2023. 32p. illus. The Child's World/Wonder, lib. ed., $34.21 (9781503858398); e-book, $55.64 (9781503867154). 592.

The Life Cycles series introduces this essential elementary-science concept in short chapters with descriptive paragraphs and colorful, full-page, captioned photographs, many of which feature up-close perspectives. Each volume begins similarly, recognizing that humans, animals, and plants all have life cycles, and includes relevant information about each living being, such as physical characteristics, food sources, and environment, while tracing its path from initial formation to maturity and explaining simple reproduction. *The Life Cycle of a Chicken* emphasizes both the chick stage (how they peck their way out of eggs, grow, eat, etc.) and the differences between fertilized and unfertilized eggs. *The Life Cycle of a Clown Fish* relates how the clown fish's symbiotic relationship with sea anemones supports its survival and the unusual way males transform into females to reproduce. *The Life Cycle of a Daisy* spotlights the importance of pollination and seed dispersal, along with the ideal amount of water and sunlight, to help daisies reproduce and grow into flowers. *The Life Cycle of an Earthworm* describes the earthworm's special physical features that allow it to crawl through dirt, its role as a decomposer, and how, possessing both male and female parts, it reproduces with other earthworms. A large life-cycle diagram concludes each book in this series that goes beyond just the basics. —*Angela Leeper*

Lightning Bolt Books: Dirt Bike Zone Series. Lerner. Gr. 1–3. (6 titles)

Enduro Racing: Rev It Up! By Briana Kaiser. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $27.99 (9781728476292). 796.7.
Freestyle Motocross: Rev It Up! By Jackie Golusky. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $27.99 (9781728476308). 796.7.
Supercross: Rev It Up! By Jackie Golusky. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $27.99 (9781728476322). 796.7.
Supermoto: Rev It Up! By Brianna Kaiser. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $27.99 (9781728476339). 796.

Grab your goggles because the bikes blasting through the Lightning Bolt Books: Dirt Bike Zone series kick up some serious dirt. These titles provide young thrill-seekers with very general introductions to different types of dirt-bike races and competitions. Designed for primary-grade readers, the series utilizes solid page backgrounds in saturated colors, large type, and a stock photo on every page, making for a supportive reading experience. Some of the photos are full-page backgrounds to the text, while others are smaller with labels or an accompanying text box. Each book's content is divided into four chapters that pull readers into the action, offer a brief description of the sport and the gear it requires (from bikes to body armor), and provide snapshots of biking big shots. *Enduro Racing* describes the demanding nature of these off-road races, which typically last several hours. Daredevil, airborne tricks are the name of the game in *Freestyle Motocross*, which shows impressive moves (a nine o'clock nac, anyone?) performed at the X Games and Nitro World Games. *Supercross* introduces another kind of Motocross in which bikers race around constructed dirt tracks full of bumps, jumps, and turns. Similarly, *Supermotor* features dirt and paved tracks on which riders navigate jumps and tight turns. A bike diagram and more comprehensive summary of the featured sport close each volume in this adrenalin-fueled series. —*Julia Smith*

Mythical Beasts Series. Cavendish Square. Gr. 3–6. (4 titles)

Mythical Creatures around the World. By Joanne Rippin. 2023. 32p. illus. paper, $10.58 (9781502667366); lib. ed., $29.21 (9781502667373); e-book, $29.21 (9781502667380). 398.24.
Mythical Creatures with Wings. By Joanne Rippin. 2023. 32p. illus. paper, $10.58 (9781502667304); lib. ed., $29.21 (9781502667311); e-book, $29.21 (9781502667328). 398.24.
Mythical Monsters. By Joanne Rippin. 2023. 32p. illus. paper, $10.58 (9781502667274); lib. ed., $29.21 (9781502667281); e-book, $29.21 (9781502667298). 398.24.
Mythical Sea Creatures. By Joanne Rippin. 2023. 32p. illus. paper, $10.58 (9781502667335); lib. ed., $29.21 (9781502667342); e-book, $29.21 (9781502667359). 398.24.

Readers perusing the Mythical Beasts series will find their imaginations sparked by the unusual creatures—some new, some familiar—collected therein. Each thematic title features seven legendary creatures, each occu-

pying a four-page chapter that describes it, explains its associated myth(s) and history, and concludes with a list of "Known Facts." European and Greek myths predominate, with Asia receiving modest representation; however, Africa and South and Central America are conspicuously absent from the collections. *Magical Creatures around the World* touches on Scandinavia's trolls in addition to China's gentle Qinlin (a hybrid being sporting a "dragon-like head with antlers, multicolored body, [and] tail and hooves of an ox") and Japan's tengu (trickster demons). In *Mythical Creatures with Wings*, readers will be impressed by tales of creatures that soar, such as the phoenix, hippogriff, Simurgh ("the Persian bird of wisdom"), and gigantic, eaglelike roc. *Mythical Monsters* surveys terrifying beasts, including ancient Greece's basilisks and Cerberus, Australia's bunyip, and Romania's vampires. In *Mythical Sea Creatures*, readers will plunge into stories featuring hydras, kraken, mermaids (including a brief introduction to Mami Wata), and the Jörmungandr from Norse mythology. The books feature eye-catching covers and colorful illustrations, including photos and reproductions of historical depictions of various creatures, making these entertaining picks for browsers who want to explore history and fantasy. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Our Solar System Series. Jump!/Pogo. Gr. 1–3. (11 titles)

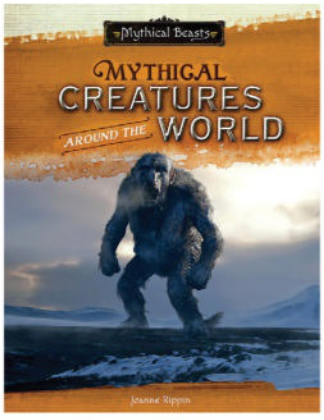
Mercury: The Fastest Planet. By Mari Schuh. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $26.99 (9798885243551); e-book, $26.99 (9798885243575). 523.41.
Saturn: The Ringed Planet. By Mari Schuh. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $26.99 (9798885243674); e-book, $26.99 (9798885243698). 523.46.
The Sun: The Center of Our Solar System. By Mari Schuh. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $26.99 (9798885243704); e-book, $26.99 (9798885243728). 523.7.
Venus: The Brightest Planet. By Mari Schuh. 2023. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $26.99 (9798885243766); e-book, $26.99 (9798885243780). 523.42.

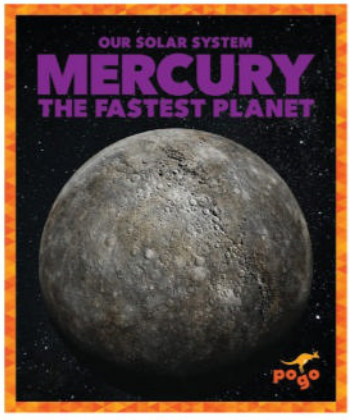
What will you discover in outer space? The Our Solar System series lets young adventurers explore that very question. Each work uses key early reading features to introduce celestial bodies to youngsters, including quick, digestible chapters that utilize clean layouts, short sentences, repetition of words and phrasing, bolded vocabulary, and "Did You Know?" fact boxes as well as crisp, labeled photos and digital diagrams that support the main text. *Mercury* shares great details about the planet closest to the sun, from its small size to its surprisingly short orbit. *Saturn* unsurprisingly discusses this planet's well-known rings as well as its tumultuous atmosphere and many moons. *The Sun* discusses the powerhouse of our solar system, noting its intense heat and the important role it plays in sustaining life on Earth and in holding planets in their orbits. *Venus* examines the planet closest to Earth; its odd, western sunrise; and its extraordinarily hot, dry surface. All of the titles have a similar concluding chapter focused on the discoveries made by satellites and modern science, helping readers better understand the short time line during which we've discovered new details about outer space. A supplemental activity at the end of each work is sure to foster curiosity and some fascinating discoveries among budding scientists. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Where Materials Come From Series. Crabtree/Seedlings. Gr. 1– 3. (4 titles)

Cotton to Clothing. By Robin Johnson. 2023. 24p. illus. paper, $8.95 (9781039806856); lib. ed., $27.93 (9781039806597). 677.
Oil to Plastic. By Robin Johnson. 2023. 24p. illus. paper, $8.95 (9781039806863); lib. ed., $27.93 (9781039806603). 665.5.
Rocks and Minerals to Aluminum. By Robin Johnson. 2023. 24p. illus. paper, $8.95 (9781039806870); lib. ed., $27.93 (9781039806610). 620.1.
Trees to Paper. By Robin Johnson. 2023. 24p. illus. paper, $8.95 (9781039806887); lib. ed., $27.93 (9781039806627). 676.

Kids are constantly bombarded with messages reminding them to recycle and be mindful about consuming natural resources. This series, Where Materials Come From, helps readers make connections among everyday products and the raw materials used to create them. The titles





share the same author and format, with two-page chapters describing raw materials, their uses, and how they're transformed into new products as well as environmental problems caused during production and solutions to mitigate those negative impacts. *Cotton to Clothing* follows step by step as fibers from cotton plants are turned into finished outfits, while recognizing how harmful cotton farming can be urging readers to buy organic and recycle old clothes. *Oil to Plastic* describes oil drilling and processing techniques but bemoans the use of fossil fuels and resulting pollution caused by unrecycled, almost-indestructible plastic waste. *Rocks and Minerals to Aluminum* also emphasizes the need for recycling and brings in negative environmental aspects associated with every stage of aluminum manufacturing: mining and the destruction of habitats, pollution caused by refineries, and red mud (a toxic byproduct). *Trees to Paper* goes from forests to cardboard, citing pollution concerns while urging recycling, upcycling, and planting new trees. Graphics-rich pages feature short sentences, word balloons, fact boxes, full-color photos, and photo insets laid out in busy, agreeable formats. These titles give kids accessible and relatable reasons to recycle, reuse, and renew. —*Kathleen McBroom*

The World around Me Series. Greenhaven/KidHaven. PreS–Gr. 1. (6 titles)

Animals in My World. By Hermione Redshaw. Illus. by Amy Li. 2023. 24p. paper, $9.25 (9781534543225); lib. ed., $26.23 (9781534543249); e-book, $26.23 (9781534543256). 590.
Colors in My World. By Hermione Redshaw. Illus. by Amy Li. 2023. 24p. paper, $9.25 (9781534543263); lib. ed., $26.23 (9781534543287); e-book, $26.23 (9781534543294). 535.6.
Helping People in My World. By Hermione Redshaw. Illus. by Amy Li. 2023. 24p. paper, $9.25 (9781534543300); lib. ed., $26.23 (9781534543324); e-book, $26.23 (9781534543331). 361.8.
Weather in My World. By Hermione Redshaw. Illus. by Amy Li. 2023. 24p. paper, $9.25 (9781534543423); lib. ed., $26.23 (9781534543447); e-book, $26.23 (9781534543454). 551.5.

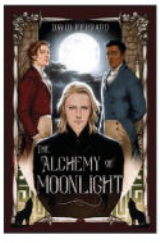
The books in the series The World around Me aim to bring common phenomena in preschoolers' worlds to life through fictional narratives framing fact-filled content. In *Animals in My World*, the text alternates between what a young girl named Lizzie knows, observes, and feels about animals and facts such as "Monkeys have fur" and "Most monkeys have tails." The character in *Colors in My World* is Zoe, whose white socks, love of chocolate, and preference for pink ice cream are juxtaposed with facts such as "The fruit and the color [orange] have the same name!" In *Helpful People in My World*, Sofia receives assistance from everyone from doctors and dentists to a postal worker to a dance teacher and a theater usher. In *Weather in My World*, the character of Ben chooses his clothing and activities based on the weather and how it affects him. Li's colorful, full-page illustrations bring a sense of cheerfulness and playfulness. Occasionally, illustrations are placed horizontally across two pages to suggest great height, rather than vertically on one page. Redshaw's text tends to be more thematically linked than truly cohesive, but that won't bother young readers. These books are useful for classroom units for younger children as well as browsing. —*Miriam Aronin*

Older Readers

The Alchemy of Moonlight.
By David Ferraro.

May 2023. 384p. Page Street, $18.99 (9781645679721). Gr. 10–12.

Set in France in 1873, Ferraro's mash-up of gothic romance and horror finds 17-year-old Marquis Emile St. Aubert masquerading as a servant to the wealthy Montoni family in order to hide from his evil aunt, Madame Cheron, who plots to have him institutionalized for loving men so that she can steal his inheritance. Emile plans to remain in hiding until his eighteenth birthday, when he will come into that inheritance. Before that, however, while still in disguise, he meets the apprentice doctor M. Valancourt and is immediately smitten. But to complicate matters, Emile is assigned duty as valet to the handsome young Count Morano, who, it turns out, also loves men and invites Emile to begin a relationship. While Emile still loves Valancourt, he nevertheless finds himself gradually falling in love with Morano, too. Complications ensue (boy, do they) as Emile finds himself transported, along with Morano, to the Montoni's haunted Castle Udolpho in Italy, where a shocking secret changes everything . . . and then some. Packed with compulsively readable, nonstop action, this is an affectionate homage to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, eighteenth-century novelist Ann Radcliffe's pioneering horror novel. Ferraro expands upon the original to include a suspense-filled, double-barreled gay love story with a twist. —*Michael Cart*



The Chaperone.
By M. Hendrix.

June 2023. 332p. Sourcebooks/Fire, $18.99 (9781728284859); paper, $11.99 (9781728260006). Gr. 9–12.

Listen to your chaperone. That is the first rule in Stella's world in New America, where girls can't be alone in public, the school system only teaches girls how to be wives and mothers, and every girl is accompanied almost everywhere by a chaperone until she marries. All of these rules exist for the girls' own protection—those who don't follow the rules tend to disappear. When Stella's chaperone, Sister Helen, mysteriously passes away, Stella is immediately given a new one. Sister Laura is unusual; she leaves Stella alone in the library, encourages her to go jogging with her father, and even takes her for self-defense lessons. As high-school graduation approaches, Stella's father begins to push for her to spend Visitation (the only time a girl may be alone with a boy) with a constable named Joseph. Desperate to escape a forced marriage, Stella begins to discover that New America may have lied to everyone—there may be more to the world than the Minutemen controlling New America admit, and there may even be a way out. Stella is a compelling and relatable heroine trying to navigate the frightening world she lives in, and that world is rendered in mundane but terrifying detail. Hendrix's dystopian society is somewhat of a *Handmaid's Tale* for YAs and offers a dark world with a glimmer of hope. —*Marija Lukic*

Court of the Undying Seasons.
By A. M. Strickland.

May 2023. 400p. Feiwel and Friends, $18.99 (9781250832627). Gr. 10–12.

Every year, vampires who are revered like royalty (and feared for the threat of death they bring) come to six villages to choose a handful of teenagers for their school at Castle Courtsheart. Those chosen for the Finding will attend the school and learn to become vampires; if they fail, they'll become mindless servants. Fin, who tricks the vampires into taking her over her true love and best friend, expects she will do neither; instead, she'll likely die for not meeting the vampires' high expectations. When she learns her friend never wanted Fin to take her place, she's galvanized to succeed at the Castle, no matter what it takes. But as her transformation into a vampire begins after a near-death experience, she becomes more sure she wants to kill all vampires for what they've done to her. Strickland (*Beyond the Black Door*, 2019) is a practiced writer of dark fantasy, as evidenced by their previous books. As the vampire trend rises again, this may catch the eye of legions of renewed Twilight fans. —*Stacey Comfort*

HD High-Demand Hot List for Youth

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

Everyone Wants to Know. By Kelly Loy Gilbert. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (9781665901369). Gr. 7–12. June.

Honor Lo confronts family secrets in a painfully public way in this thoughtful yet searing account of the price of reality-TV fame from award-winning Gilbert.

Going Bicoastal. By Dahlia Adler. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250871640). Gr. 8–12. June.

Natalya must choose between two options for her summer, and they play out in alternating time lines in this clever novel from acclaimed author Adler.

How Does Santa Go down the Chimney? By Mac Barnett. Illus. by Jon Klassen. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536223767). PreS–Gr. 3. Sept.

Bringing their usual blend of dry, off-kilter humor and bold illustrations, Barnett and Klassen explore the question of how, exactly, Santa gets into all those houses.

The Library of Broken Worlds. By Alaya Dawn Johnson. Scholastic, $21.99 (9781338290622). Gr. 9–12. June.

Johnson offers readers a swirling fantasy set in a labyrinthine underground library, where warring gods threaten to destroy a world unless one girl can stop them.

Secret of the Moon Conch. By David Bowles and Guadalupe García McCall. Bloomsbury YA, $19.99 (9781547609895). Gr. 8–12. June.

Modern day Mexican teen Sitlali and sixteenth-century Aztec warrior Calizto meet when they both touch an enchanted conch in this romance co-authored by a pair of award-winning writers.

Something, Someday. By Amanda Gorman. Illus. by Christian Robinson. Viking, $18.99 (9780593203255). PreS–Gr. 3. Sept.

Gorman's hopeful poem about community and determination is beautifully matched with Robinson's iconic, winsome artwork in this lyrical picture book.

Stuntboy, In-Between Time. By Jason Reynolds. Illus. by Raúl the Third. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy, $14.99 (9781534418226). Gr. 3–5. Aug.

Reynolds and Raúl the Third follow up their best-selling *Stuntboy, in the Meantime* with this sequel, which finds Portico stressed about splitting time between his parents' separate apartments.

Wrecker. By Carl Hiaasen. Knopf, $18.99 (9780593376287). Gr. 5–8. Sept.

Fans of Hiaasen's classic middle-grade Florida mysteries will be thrilled to learn about his latest, which follows a kid named Wrecker who stumbles on some smugglers.

Don't Ask If I'm Okay.
By Jessica Kara.

May 2023. 336p. Page Street, $18.99 (9781645677659). Gr. 9–12.

There are as many ways to grieve as there are grieving people, but Gage suspects that most people expect the bereaved to "get over it" sooner rather than later. It has been a year since Gage's best friend and cousin, Hunter, died in a car accident, and Gage, a passenger in the car, is not over it. In an effort to support others, such as his young cousin Justine, he won't let on how he really feels, especially that he has full-blown panic attacks whenever he gets into a car and therefore has to walk everywhere. The only witness to these attacks is his father, who counterproductively advises Gage to "man up" and not burden his family. When Justine runs off and ends up in a town 10 miles away, Gage decides to go find her, and his friends rally around him to get him through the car ride to bring her home. Gage's growth and journey of healing are marked by empathetic and engaging characters and a solid plot that will have readers cheering for Gage and his friends. —*Donna Scanlon*

The Luis Ortega Survival Club.
By Sonora Reyes.

May 2023. 320p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, $19.99 (9780063060302). Gr. 9–12.

Ariana's parents don't trust therapists—not for their struggling marriage and not for their selectively mute daughter, who can only speak when she feels safe. Ari, who's pretty sure she's autistic, expresses herself primarily through clothes. When popular Luis Ortega, who doesn't care that she never talks, befriends her, Ari finds herself head over heels. But when they have sex, Ari can't quite figure out what happened—she never told Luis no, but she didn't say yes. Then the rumors start, and a note from someone who says Luis hurt them, too, appears in her locker. As she starts to understand that what happened wasn't an accident, she also realizes that she's not powerless—and, more importantly, not alone. While National Book Award finalist Reyes (*The Lesbiana's Guide to Catholic School,* 2022) has created something of a one-note villain in Luis, the character is far less important here than the people who have survived him, and watching them (and especially Ari) find their feet and their voices together is the true joy of the book. A valuable addition to shelves. —*Maggie Reagan*

Only This Beautiful Moment.
By Abdi Nazemian.

May 2023. 400p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, $19.99 (9780063039377). Gr. 9–12.

When Moud flies from Los Angeles to Tehran to visit his dying grandfather, it's a welcome reprieve from his pop-culture-saturated day-to-day. Unfortunately, he's traveling with his father, Saeed, with whom he shares a strained relationship stemming from the death of Moud's mother and Moud coming out as gay. He has always taken his father's coldness as a culturally derived prejudice, which he expects to see reflected in Iran. The truth reveals itself to be far more muddled as Moud explores the secret underground enjoyed by Tehran's gay youth and is shocked to learn how his grandfather's own homosexuality has shaped the fates of his father and himself. This story, told in three points of view from three generations of the same family, is nothing short of masterful. Moud and his family are multifaceted and exquisitely crafted, and the setting of Tehran is suffused with sumptuous food, dance, and poetry. The subject of prejudice against LGBTQ+ people in both America and Iran is woven into all three characters' stories, but Nazemian takes pains to highlight the courage borne by individuals in the face of oppressive regimes, holding them up as exemplars. This is the kind of story that young-adult literature is made for: a story of the heart, of the very real human struggles young people face and that adults try to—but never truly—forget. —*Reinhardt Suarez*

Painted Devils.
By Margaret Owen.

May 2023. 384p. Holt, $19.99 (9781250831163). Gr. 9–12.

Owen returns to the Germanic, folklore-rich world of *Little Thieves* (2021) with another chaotic adventure that turns a shrewd eye toward the concepts of virginity and desire. Vanja Schmidt has been a maid and a princess, an orphan and a daughter, a villain and a hero. But doubt overwhelms her as she travels to meet Emeric Conrad, the surprise love of her life. One small con later, Vanja accidentally starts a cult. Worse, Emeric, who's being reviewed for elevation to full prefect status, is assessing Vanja for fraud. And the god that Vanja invented has manifested and demands Emeric as a virgin sacrifice. Vanja and Emeric have a net of uncertain truths to decipher: Is this Scarlet Maiden really a god? Could another sacrifice satisfy her, and at what cost? Most frighteningly, what if Emeric were to be "claimed" by another? Vanja and Emeric, both demisexual, have little experience with physical acts of love, and as they grow more comfortable and more in love, Owen eases them through conversations about sexual choice, wants, and safety (there's even a high-fantasy version of an IUD). Prickly antihero Vanja both fears her own innate nature and wants to be claimed for it, by the lover she's never had and the family she's never known; Owen writes her story with the compassion and wit that will leave readers holding her close. —*Maggie Reagan*

Rubi Ramos's Recipe for Success.
By Jessica Parra.

May 2023. 320p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250862525); e-book, $10.99 (9781250862532). Gr. 9–12.

Banned from baking outside of the shops her Cuban immigrant parents named after her, 17-year-old Rubi is given a "recipe for success." Catholic school achievement + a dash of extracurriculars = top-tier Alma College. But when she is burned by the Alma admissions committee, Rubi hides being wait-listed and then ignores her parents' ban by following her heart and competing in a local amateur bake-off. As she dishes entries that honor her heritage and satisfy Rubi's "longing to bring [her] unbaked recipes out of the margins," tense family dynamics and first-generation expectations receive tender treatment. A cute surfer-turned-trig-tutor spices up Rubi's secrets, and a sweet friend balances the salty rival on Rubi's debate squad. With strong nods to *The Great British Bake Off*—think congratulatory fist pumps from a suave host—this debut novel bursts with baking puns and flirty innuendo. Those hungry for a compulsively readable romance will be satisfied, but the deeper consideration of how the things we do (and what we love) become part of who we are—well, that's the cherry on top. —*Kit Ballenger*

Sing Me to Sleep.
By Gabi Burton.

June 2023. 432p. Bloomsbury YA, $19.99 (9781547610372). Gr. 8–12.

Burton's fast-paced debut is sure to dazzle readers. As the last of her kind, Saoirse must keep her true identity from those who would harm her, but her siren instincts demand that she kill. Saoirse moonlights as an assassin for the mysterious Raze to satisfy her murderous urge. After graduating from her academy, she is recruited to guard Crown Prince Hayes and begins receiving vaguely threatening notes that encourage her to dig into the Royal Family's dark past. While getting to know Hayes and fighting to control her base instincts, Saoirse uncovers a brewing war and must decide where her loyalties lie. *Sing Me to Sleep* is an enthralling read with complex and morally gray characters. Saoirse's love for her sister is endearing, and it's easy for readers to empathize with the siren as she is forced to make difficult decisions. While Saoirse's world is described as segregated, those details are lost in favor of its fast-paced nature. Be prepared for a fantasy that will hook from the first page and won't let go until the very last! —*Amber Hayes*

Middle Readers

Afterward, Everything Was Different: A Tale of the Pleistocene.
By Jairo Buitrago. Illus. by Rafael Yockteng. Tr. by Elisa Amado.

May 2023. 64p. Greystone Kids/Aldana Libros, $19.95 (9781778400605). Gr. 2–4.

In wordless monochrome landscapes laid down in fascinating detail, Yockteng employs sophisticated brush- and pencilwork to portray a small clan of prehistoric wanderers making its way through a world of massive megafauna, taking refuge for the winter in a cave after battling its huge resident bear, and finally gathering in awe around a fire after one child uses materials to teach herself to draw the animals on the cave's

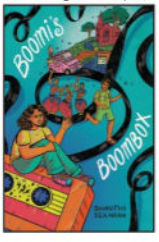
walls and goes on to turn pictures into stories. In his two afterwords, Buitrago adds the thread of a story line, caps this commemoration of a watershed moment in human development with a description of the materials used for our oldest art, and writes lyrically of the sensibility that must have gone hand in hand with its creation: "She observed the light, got lost in the light, painted the light. As time went by . . . those who had survived the nights sought refuge there to find themselves, to sing, tell stories, to be themselves again." Though the author sets this episode in the Pleistocene, there are metaphorical levels to the tale for perceptive readers to glimpse, from depicting that first artist as a woman to assembling a ragged hominin cast composed of individuals belonging to different early and possibly even protohuman species. The facts may be lost to time; the truth is still there on cave walls and in all our storytimes. —*John Peters*

The Beautiful Something Else.
By Ash Van Otterloo.
May 2023. 288p. Scholastic, $17.99 (9781338843224). Gr. 5–7.

In this moving tale of growing into yourself, Van Otterloo gives upper-middle-grade readers a relatable, imperfect nonbinary protagonist who struggles to make their way in a new school when an overdose sends their mom off to rehab. Sparrow, who has always bristled at their birth name and gender norms, is nervous about going to Windy Hall, her mother's old home. According to her mom, it was "a palace of horrors," but in the care of Sparrow's estranged aunt, Mags, it's a warm and accepting place. Against the backdrop of the rainbow-painted house and in the halls of a new school, Sparrow gets the chance to discover who they truly are with the help of some maybe-magical boots. While it occasionally feels a bit more pedantic than others in the genre, this story of overcoming internalized beliefs, learning to admit when you need help, and standing up for yourself as much as for your friends features a unique character in Sparrow, whom many children will appreciate spending time with. For fans of David Leviathan and Kyle Lukoff. —*Aryssa Damron*

Boomi's Boombox.
By Shanthi Sekaran.
May 2023. 272p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, $18.99 (9780063051584). Gr. 5–7.

"Do you know what potential is? Potential is a long, bony finger pointing to everything about you that's not good enough." Infused with grief, joy, and sardonic humor, this tale of a preteen finding out that a note left by her sorely missed father after his COVID-19 death, which reads, "You can change your life," is true in several surprising ways offers a generous measure of comfort as well as entertainment. After failing an audition at her California ballet academy and, as a consequence, being forced into weight-loss plans by her mom, Boomika Gopalan discovers that the antique tape player that came with the aforementioned note is a time machine. Its old tunes keep sending her back to 1986 to meet her 12-year-old dad in a racially divided British factory town, convincing her that she's been given some sort of mission. But what? Unraveling that mystery leads to adventures, bold choices, a climactic Bollywood-style gala in the past, and—with Boomi's reclamation of her own heritage in dance—a buoyant, upbeat ending in the present. Boomi's strong, distinctive narrative voice will sweep readers into her world, and her nuanced relations with a truly colorful supporting cast enhance her tale's humor and emotional resonance. —*John Peters*



The First Magnificent Summer.
By R. L. Toalson.
May 2023. 352p. Aladdin, $17.99 (9781665925495). Gr. 5–8.

Toalson's poignant epistolary novel follows 12-year-old aspiring writer Victoria, who after two years apart is anticipating an opportunity to reconnect with her estranged father. But

Sometimes to find the sun,
the moon must be left behind
The Moth Keeper
K. O'Neill
Art © 2023 by K. O'Neill
★ "This worthy volume explores themes of connection, mythology, personal growth, and tradition."
—Publishers Weekly, starred review
★ "Hand this quiet, beautifully drawn book to readers of gentle, uplifting, character-driven comics."
—Booklist, starred review
★ "A nature-based coming-of-age story aglow with the light of loving bonds and communal living."
—Kirkus Reviews, starred review
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when a chance to bond devolves into a string of abusive, heartrending events, Victoria realizes that she has to decide whether she will let her father dictate her life. Victoria overcomes countless challenges in this book, from emotional and verbal abuse to getting her first period in an unsafe space to having her diary entries violated—but she perseveres, thanks to the support of her younger siblings, whom she aims to protect, and her mom, who means well and does her best from afar. The story may prove challenging for some readers, but it also shows that, like Victoria, they can overcome these challenges and those who mean to hurt them for their age or gender. With her feelings shared in a variety of formats, from journal entries to poems to stream-of-consciousness brainstorming, Victoria will have readers rooting for her to not only survive but thrive. —*Stephanie Cohen*

Ginny Off the Map.

By Caroline Hickey. Illus. by Kelly Murphy.

June 2023. 320p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $16.99 (9780316324625). Gr. 4–7.

Geography-loving Ginny has moved to a new town—again—and she's facing a lonely summer. Her medic dad has been unexpectedly deployed to Afghanistan, her older sister has already made other friends, and her mom is busy with a demanding work project. When her one bright spot, a geography-themed camp, gets canceled at the last minute, Ginny is desperate to avoid a jewelry-focused alternative. A brilliant idea strikes: she'll create her own geography camp, round up the neighborhood kids as the unsuspecting campers, and bombard them with her favorite facts. But things don't go as planned, and her family struggles with her father's absence. How can Ginny hold everything, including herself, together? This entertaining, earnest story is a terrific observation of family dynamics (particularly clashing siblings) and the complexity of life as a child with a parent in the military. Ginny is an inspiring protagonist, gradually opening herself up to other people's perspectives and interests without compromising her own unique personality and passions. An engaging and empathetic examination of an array of human relationships—including the one we have with ourselves. —*Emily Graham*

Half Moon Summer.

By Elaine Vickers.

June 2023. 352p. Peachtree, $17.99 (9781682635391); e-book, $10.99 (9781682635544). Gr. 4–7.

When Drew, a newborn baby, wouldn't stop crying, a hospital nurse tucked him in beside Mia, another newborn, and he calmed right down. Twelve years later, Drew begins his summer with low expectations, since his best friend has moved away from Half Moon Bay. When Dad takes up running, he persuades Drew to join him on daily outings, training for an upcoming half-marathon. Before that event, a girl named Mia comes to stay with her grandmother and joins their running crew. Just when the summer seems brighter, Drew learns that his father is seriously ill, and Mia discovers that her family will be losing their home. Each is devastated initially, but they continue to run while supporting each other and making discoveries about themselves and their relationships with family members and friends. The book has a small cast of well-developed, mostly likable characters, whose interactions and reflections are at the heart of the novel. The author of *Like Magic* (2016) and *Paper Chains* (2017), Vickers tells the main characters' intertwined stories through alternating first-person narratives, with Drew writing in journal-entry style and Mia expressing herself in free verse. Each adds an interesting perspective, while both move the story forward. An involving, heartening novel of change and growing awareness. —*Carolyn Phelan*

I'm an American.

By Darshana Khiani. Illus. by Laura Freeman.

May 2023. 48p. Viking, $19.99 (9780593464724). Gr. 1–4.

In colorful picture book format, this title features a diverse group of children answering,

Continued on p.48

Being the new kid doesn't get easier
but Alina is determined to reinvent herself
the UNLOVABLE Alina Butt
THE UNLOVABLE ALINA BUTT
Ambreen Butt-Hussain
9781459834910 • PB • $12.95
Ambreen Butt-Hussain
"Charming, tightly plotted...Alina's witty, vulnerable narratorial voice guides readers through her intensely authentic personal evolution."
—Kirkus Reviews
Netflix's Never Have I Ever for middle-grade readers!
ORCA

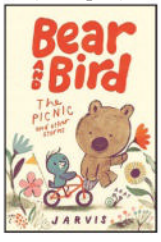
Focus on Early Reading

Bear and Bird: The Picnic and Other Stories.

By Jarvis. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 64p. Candlewick, $15.99 (9781536228328). K–Gr. 3.

Four short, episodic stories about best buds Bear (a cuddly brown bear) and Bird (an adorable bluebird) make up this irresistibly funny beginning chapter book for early fluent readers, the first in a new series. Jarvis' soft, rounded illustrations are invitingly childlike, and they amplify a situation's humor or sweetness. Even with the repetition of key words, the narrative's writing flows nicely, and the text generally fills half of the page. In the first story, Bird topples into a flower and gets stuck, only for Bear—who is not the brightest bulb in the box—to stumble upon the bloom and believe he's discovered a talking plant. The next tale picks up after Bird has been freed as the two friends embark on a hike and picnic, for which Bear proves hilariously ill prepared. The final two stories see Bird and Bear take a stab at painting and cozily resolve a misunderstanding. Readers will chuckle at the duo's well-intentioned mistakes and be utterly charmed by the genuine affection and kindness they display toward each other. —*Julia Smith*



Dirt and Bugsy: Bug Catchers.

By Megan Litwin. Illus. by Shauna Lynn Panczyszyn.

2023. 32p. Penguin, $15.99 (9780593519929); paper, $4.99 (9780593519912). K–Gr. 2.

In Litwin's easy reader (geared toward progressing readers), Dirt and Bugsy's bug-catching expedition is interrupted by rain. The two boys shift gears, creating a sheltered "bug barn" and transporting their catches to new "rooms" made of natural materials, such as rocks and twigs. Panczyszyn's cartoon illustrations support the text and depict grime-smudged Dirt as a fair-skinned redhead and Bugsy as Black with an afro and ladybug T-shirt; the detailed renditions of the bugs themselves truly shine. The text primarily uses short sentences featuring repeated words and phrases, but occasionally longer sentences appear, challenging kids to push their reading skills through context clues. Though the story lacks factual information about actual insects, tips on "How to Be a Good Bug Catcher" are appended. A fun backyard adventure with a universal emphasis on problem-solving. —*Miriam Aronin*

Elena Rides.

By Juana Medina. Illus. by the author.

2023. 32p. Candlewick, $9.99 (9781536216356). PreS–Gr. 1.

Elena is a young elephant who is determined to master bike riding. She straps on her lime-green helmet, finds her balance, and begins pedaling. Tongue out in concentration, the indigo pachyderm "wobbles and bobbles" before—"KA-BANG!"—she splats on the ground. Up she gets to try again—and again—always with the quiet encouragement of her red-bird pal. The well-designed beginning reader places expressive, thick-lined illustrations against uncluttered, white-and-yellow backgrounds for a supportive, undistracting reading experience. The text itself is a stimulating mix of rhyme, alliteration, repetition, and onomatopoeia that is playfully printed and positioned on the page in a manner that underscores its meaning. Medina also captures the many relatable emotions Elena feels throughout the story, from excitement and determination to frustration and joy. A fresh, new offering for the Elephant and Piggie set. —*Julia Smith*

I See a Bat.

By Paul Meisel. Illus. by the author.

2023. 32p. Holiday, $15.99 (9780823452651). PreS–Gr. 1.

As twilight falls, a dog stretches out on a rug and watches the view through big glass doors. The sights from his indoor vantage point are relayed in short, declarative sentences: "I see a bat. I see stars. I see the moon." Turning his attention to matters closer to home, he looks down and sees his bowl, which is sadly empty. Meisel's expressive ink-and-watercolor cartoon artwork captures the pooch's droopy-eared and downcast-eyed disappointment. A wordless spread shows comic canine contortions around the bowl in the hopes of finding a missed morsel. After a bedtime visit to his boy to beg for more food fails, the dog falls asleep. In circular fashion, the sun comes up, bringing more sights to see, including bats (both the mammal and baseball variety) and a boy carrying a big bag of food. With a handful of words and a pleasing circular storyline, this entry in the I Like to Read series is a fetching choice for kids beginning to read on their own. —*Linda Ludke*

The Moon Is a Ball: Stories of Panda & Squirrel.

By Ed Franck. Illus. by Thé Tjong-Khing. Tr. by David Colmer.

2023. 80p. Gecko, $19.99 (9781776574933). Gr. 1–3.

Nine short stories introduce friends Panda and Squirrel in this beginning chapter book translated from the Dutch. In "The Moon," the pair tries to capture this celestial ball, with predictably disastrous results; in "Do Not Disturb," Panda discovers that being alone can be boring; and in "A Long Journey," the friends learn to choose hiking companions with care. Other stories spotlight common friendship issues: caring for a pet, playing games, and dealing with disagreements, injuries, secrets, and homesickness. The writing is concise but never choppy, employing mostly simple sentences and a broad vocabulary, which results in a smoothly written text. Tjong-Khing's full-color art features simply drawn, realistic animals and naturalistic backgrounds where lush greens (particularly for bamboo) often predominate. Full of heart and gentle humor, Panda and Squirrel are sure to please. —*Kay Weisman*

My Day with Dad.

By Rae Crawford. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 32p. Holiday, $15.99 (9780823452637). PreS–Gr. 1.

A gap-toothed child spends a fun-filled day with their father and pup in a cheery beginning reader well suited to early primary grades. The story begins as Mom drops the child off at Dad's, where they whip up a pancake breakfast. Their planned bike ride gets stymied by storm clouds, but board games tide the two over until skies clear. An afternoon enjoying the outdoors follows—"We fly kites. We look at clouds"—before dinner and bed. Bright digital artwork with bold black outlines supports the text, fills pages, and features an active child enthusiastically enjoying undivided parental attention. Short sentences in a large font sit on clean backgrounds, supporting an emerging and

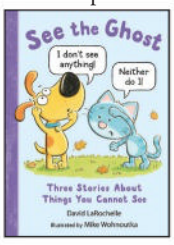
early reader audience. A good everyday selection for single caregivers as well as a promising Father's Day pick. —*Kit Ballenger*

See the Ghost: Three Stories about Things You Cannot See.

By David LaRochelle. Illus. by Mike Wohnoutka.

July 2023. 64p. Candlewick, $9.99 (9781536219821). PreS–Gr. 2.

Oh, the things readers will see in these comic, easy-reader stories about intangible forces (a ghost, the wind, and a fairy) and the trouble they wreak on familiar characters Dog and Cat. Simple sentences follow a predictable pattern for those developing their reading skills, but the stories' action always takes a delightfully unexpected turn. Through the clever use of speech bubbles and Wohnoutka's delightful, inventive illustrations, three invisible things are animated and given tremendous personality. It is a remarkable feat to pack so many genuine laughs into such a simple text for emerging readers. In the vein of its predecessor, *See the Dog: Three Stories about a Cat* (2021), there is delightful interaction between the characters and the reader and even a meta-commentary between the characters and the book itself that assumes a flattering intelligence in its child reader. This Geisel-winning series keeps the bar high with this newest installment. Not only does it set beginning readers up for success with repetition and context clues galore, but it entertains to its very core. —*Becca Worthington*



Squad Goals: The Unstoppable Women of the US Women's National Soccer Team.

By Laurie Calkhoven. Illus. by Monique Dong.

May 2023. 48p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight, $17.99 (9781665933421). Gr. 1–3. 796.3346.

Beginning with the first recorded soccer match for women (Scotland, 1881) and ending with outstanding American players, past and present, this book shows that women's soccer has come a long way. The U.S. was relatively late to field a competitive national team, but Title IX became a pivot point in sports' history. From the upbeat introduction to the lively, colorful digital illustrations, the book is charged with enthusiasm for women's soccer, the history of the U.S. team, its dramatic moments in World Cup competition, and its superstars. On a practical level, Calkhoven also advises beginning players on how to master three basic soccer skills. Her ability to write for newbies as well as knowledgeable fans gives this entry in the You Should Meet transitional-reader series its broad appeal. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Starla Jean Cracks the Case.

By Elana K. Arnold. Illus. by A. N. Kang.

2023. 96p. Roaring Brook, $14.99 (9781250305800). Gr. 1–3.

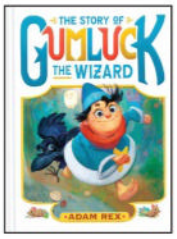
"There is one thing you need to know if you're going to walk a chicken," writes young Starla Jean. "You can go on a walk *with* a chicken . . . but you can't *take* a chicken on a walk." And indeed, as Starla Jean chases after her pet chicken, Opal Egg, it proves the truth of that insight, darting off and ultimately finding several small, mysterious, colored beads that turn out to be from a lost necklace belonging to Dani, an elderly treasure hunter. But where is the shiny white opal that went with the beads? Leave it to Opal Egg to pull *off* one more pullet surprise by pulling *out* the missing stone from Dani's mop of shiny white hair! Being a "sister expert" as well as a "chicken expert," Starla Jean sees a bubble party as the obvious next step, and Kang gathers the entire cast into a final full-spread scene to fill the air with soap bubbles. An amicable exploit for emergent chapter-book readers who are fans of the vivacious hen and her equally lively keeper. —*John Peters*

The Story of Gumluck the Wizard.

By Adam Rex. Illus. by the author.

Aug. 2023. 140p. Chronicle, $14.99 (9781797213231). Gr. 2–4.

Gumluck is a small, helpful wizard whose story is relayed by the curmudgeonly but good-hearted raven, Helvetica. Helvetica disapprovingly observes that the townsfolk like asking favors of Gumluck without giving him anything in return, not even a thank you. As the requests pour in prior to the Harvest Dance, Gumluck wields his sometimes-wonky magic and harbors hopes of being named this year's Harvest Hero. But when Gumluck refuses an unethical request from the town's snooty prince, unkind gossip starts to circulate about the wizard behind his back, and an unexpected trip into the Haunted Forest leaves him haunted by a small ghost named Butterscotch. Rex can always be counted on for a laugh, and there are many to be found in this early chapter book, namely in the distinct characterizations and Helvetica's snarky asides. Amid the fairy-tale action (a crisis at the castle requires Gumluck to come to the rescue), Rex embeds heartfelt messaging about friendship, kindness, and gratitude that never gets sappy, and his pencil illustrations inject even more magic into this spellbinding read. —*Julia Smith*



Two Green Birds.

By Geraldo Valério. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 88p. Groundwood, $14.99 (9781773067957). K–Gr. 3.

Francisco can't wait to visit his grandmother who, he's been told, has a surprise for him. When he arrives at her house, Grandma takes him into the backyard, where a cage holding two parakeets hangs from a guava tree. Francisco is mesmerized by the birds' lustrous green feathers and can't wait to help Grandma care for them. Their plans are thrown for a loop, however, when the skittish birds refuse to eat, causing Grandma and Francisco to search for another way to cheer up the parakeets. Vivid spot and double-page art adorn this gentle beginning chapter book, whose story was inspired by Valério's boyhood in Brazil. The relationship between grandmother and grandson is tender and realistically portrayed, while their patience with and growing understanding of the parakeets in their care will resonate with any new pet owner. —*Julia Smith*

The Vanishing Friend.

By Christine Evans. Illus. by Patrick Corrigan.

2023. 96p. Albert Whitman, $12.99 (9780807581001). Gr. 1–4.

In this latest chapter book in a fantasy series about two elementary-school kids and their magical adventures with a Wish Library, Luca and Raven arrive at sleepaway camp. At home, the Wish Library has caused them a lot of trouble in the past, and they're looking forward to a week without magic. The camp is set on a farm, where Luca and Raven have a lot of fun gathering chicken eggs, riding horses, and meeting new friends. They don't even mind cleaning up after the horses in the barn. When their new friend, Jasper, disappears from camp—and from everyone else's memories—Luca and Raven suspect that magic is involved. A compelling mystery with themes of friendship and bullying, where the reader knows more than the characters, this fifth book in the series can be read as a stand-alone. Two sleepaway camp books with similar themes include *Into Darkness* (2021), by Liz Braswell, and *Camp Famous* (2022), by Jennifer Blecher. —*Bobbie Peyton*

Wednesday Wilson Connects the Dots.

By Bree Galbraith. Illus. by Morgan Goble.

June 2023. 144p. Kids Can, $15.99 (9781525303296). Gr. 2–4.

Eight-year-old Wednesday, an aspiring entrepreneur, and Charlie, her best buddy, are attempting to choose a new business idea when one of Wednesday's mothers informs them that their ex-friend Ruby will be spending the day with them. The three kids walk to a nearby park and set up a freckle business, applying dots to their clients' faces using special markers. What could possibly go wrong? The third volume in the Wednesday Wilson series offers grade-school drama played out among friends, rivals, and family members. With somewhat large type, plenty of white space, and attractive grayscale illustrations on most of the double-page spreads, this volume is well designed for children transitioning to chapter books. The amusing first-person narrative will please Wednesday Wilson fans as well as readers new to this enjoyable series. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Continued from p.45

"What do you think makes a person an American?" After some initial answers like "where we live" and "how we look," each child goes on to share specific values they believe in and why. For example, "basic human rights" stems from one student's Irish ancestors, who migrated to escape hunger and poverty; another, whose family found refuge from war-torn Somalia, highlights "safety." For some, their definitions stem from experiences that notably *don't* reflect the other values, such as those of a displaced Muscogee family in the 1800s ("I believe in perseverance") and a contemporary Black family's experience with redlining ("We will continue our fight for equality"). The characters and their stories reflect many lived realities and provide a dynamic sense of America's many facets, which is echoed in Freeman's lovely, luminous, quilt-like illustrations. Though some complex concepts might make more sense to older readers, this will likely encourage discussion and further exploration of American ideals and identity. Robust source notes offer a wealth of supportive background. —*Shelle Rosenfeld*

The Journal of Anxious Izzy Parker.
By Alma Fullerton. Illus. by Beena Mistry.

May 2023. 90p. Second Story, paper, $10.95 (9781772603163). Gr. 2–4.

In this feel-good story told in journal entries, readers meet Izzy, who is anxious all of the time—so anxious that she's receiving an emotional support dog, which she names Gandalf, because she figures it must take a wizard to help soothe her anxiety. Readers follow along as Izzy goes through her day to day, moving to a new place and making new friends, all activities that make her want to throw up. For kids who feel anxious sometimes, which is many of them, this is a window into the life of someone whose anxiety gets in the way of every aspect of her life. The author has an emotional support animal herself and is able to weave in rich details about the kind of work these companions do for their humans. Some entries end with a small cartoon illustration of a charming scene from the narrative, such as Izzy running away from her rooster, Meanie, after collecting eggs. This is a great read for kids who want to unlock their inner lions and be brave! —*Kristina Pino*

Moth in a Fancy Cardigan.
By Charlotte Lance. Illus. by David Booth.

June 2023. 136p. Berbay, $19.99 (9781922610577). Gr. 2–4.

Perspective is everything in this illustrated chapter book, which revolves around two insects who couldn't be more different. Gary Gray Moth is a bona fide Eeyore, whose drab Tuesday takes a turn before school. An accidental run-in with Florence, a dazzling butterfly in his class, results in a chaotic moment of a spilled backpack, windswept homework, and swapped cardigans: Florence's colorful, sparkling cardigan in Gary's possession and his gray one in Florence's. Both are secretly pleased with the situation—Gary gaining a pop of confidence, and Florence luxuriating in the gray cardi's unobtrusive coziness. Unfortunately, Florence knows she must locate her regular cardigan or risk her mom's displeasure. Gary and Florence each narrate chapters that instantly show readers their unique personalities and unexpected layers. During Florence's cardigan search, she discovers important family history that validates her wish to have a bit of gray in her life, while Gary's mood soars with the addition of color in his. Booth's grayscale doodles, accented with yellow, are the perfect complement for this quirky celebration of self-expression. —*Julia Smith*

The Museum of Lost and Found.
By Leila Sales. Illus. by Jacqueline Li.

May 2023. 304p. Abrams/Amulet, $18.99 (9781419754517) Gr. 4–7.

Sixth grade has been confusing. Vanessa's best friend, Bailey, has grown distant, and when Vanessa learns that she wasn't invited to Bailey's birthday party, it seems their relationship is officially over. Thankfully, Vanessa makes a happier discovery, too: an abandoned museum at a nearby park, complete with a mysteriously abandoned painting. She puts together an exhibit about her floundering friendship, hoping to decipher why it ended, and soon other kids including her older brother and an unusual boy from her Hebrew school, join her in creating their own displays. News of the imminent building demolition sets Vanessa in a race against time to try to save the museum—and possibly her friendship with Bailey—in the process. It's an intriguing premise, and the tone is delightfully conversational, even when tackling topics of shifting friendships, body-focused repetitive behavior, and having an active-duty parent overseas. Discussions of relationships are nuanced and thoughtful, and the book ends on a realistic but hopeful note. A creative and compassionate examination of friendship in all forms. —*Emily Graham*

Starboard.
By Nicola Skinner.

June 2023. 416p. Harper, $16.99 (9780063071735). Gr. 4–7.

As a waning reality-TV star, 11-year-old Kirsten has a lot on her mind as she embarks on a class field trip. But all of that goes to the wayside when she finds herself at the field trip's destination: the SS *Great Britain*, a dry-docked 1837 ocean-liner-turned-museum. Enamored, Kirsten is unable to pull herself away after her class has disembarked. The ship feels the same toward the girl, and just as her ex–best friend, Olive, comes to fetch her, it breaks loose and splashes into the sea with Kirsten as captain. Even weirder, the ship communicates with Kirsten via telepathy, a chatty map, and museum mannequins come to life, leaving the feuding friends with no choice but to embark on an incredible journey. This inventive book proceeds with whimsical humor, and readers will be delighted to know that the ship is a real-life destination. The offbeat plot has wacky moments, but it also goes deeper, demonstrating that loving others is a strength, never a weakness. An enthralling adventure packed with history and heart. —*Emily Graham*

There Flies the Witch.
By Mayonn Paasewe-Valchev.

May 2023. 224p. Greenwillow, $18.99 (9780062993649). Gr. 6–8.

Red wonders if she has the same strength as her mentor, Yakaka, a witch who flies worldwide, mending rain forests and tending troubled valleys. Yet strength is all Red has left when an accident separates her from Yakaka and she's saved by a family who lives alone near the sea. As she tries to practice her magic, parts of Red's past return, changing her relationship with Yakaka. If her mentor comes back, will Red follow and abandon her new family? This is a powerful story about forgiveness and healing. The grand adventure is found not in finding a mystical purpose nor defeating an evil king, but in a girl who learns to write her story. Red's new family provides the hope her character needs, building cathartic moments despite disasters like a rising storm and buried secrets. Storms can end, family can find each other, and stories create the strongest magic. For readers who are fans of quiet adventures and (literal) magical storytelling, this is one to hold near your heart. —*Rachel Smithline*

Young

Becoming Charley.
By Kelly DiPucchio. Illus. by Loveis Wise.

May 2023. 40p. Knopf, $18.99 (9780593429044). K–Gr. 2.

Charley understands what young caterpillars are supposed to do: put their heads down and consume as much milkweed as possible. There are so many interesting things to see, though! Charley wants to look at trees, wildflowers, mountains, stars, clouds, waterfalls, and the sea. His mission, however, is clear: eat, form a chrysalis, and develop into an orange and black Monarch butterfly. Digital illustrations vividly portray Charley's desire to do things differently. The other caterpillars do as they are instructed and do not seem to mind. They all successfully emerge from their chrysalises, but Charley requires a bit more time in his. An elder is afraid Charley won't make it, until suddenly a new butterfly emerges from Charley's chrysalis and unfurls its wings, uniquely colorful and reflecting all the things Charley loves. As children decide who they are going to be, this story invites them to recognize that there may be more than one path to follow. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Bibi.
By Jo Weaver. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 32p. Peachtree, $18.99 (9781682635537). PreS–Gr. 2.

Bibi is respected as a wise elder in the flamingo flock, imparting all kinds of knowledge regarding their kind. She's taught youngsters to stand on one foot and preen their feathers, and she also helps new parents with their nests and chicks. When their lake begins drying up, it's clear that the flock needs to move on, but there's a major problem: some birds are too young to fly. Bibi comes to the rescue, offering to walk the chicks over the blistering sand-flats

to the next lake while the rest of the flock flies ahead. It's an arduous trek, but the intrepid Bibi makes certain that no bird is left behind,

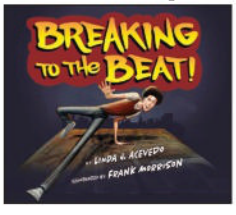
and the chicks are reunited with their waiting parents. Thrilled to have ushered the babies to safety, Bibi fears she may not have the energy to make the next necessary journey when the chicks are grown. The other grateful flamingos insist on turning the tables and caring for the elderly bird until they can all depart as a complete flock. The sweet story, based on real flamingo behavior, radiates kindness and camaraderie. The gorgeous charcoal and digitally-colored illustrations are a striking combination of soft pinks and grays, alternately conveying the wonderful coziness of the flock and the daunting vastness of their journey. A beautiful celebration of wise elders and unfailing kindness. —*Emily Graham*

Breaking to the Beat!

By Linda J. Acevedo. Illus. by Frank Morrison.

May 2023. 32p. Lee & Low, $19.95 (9781643796390). K–Gr. 3.

This joyous celebration of break dancing is a visual treat. Vibrant full-page illustrations pop off pages, perfectly complementing the spare but effective text. The story begins in the Bronx in the early 1970s, evoking the Puerto Rican-inspired rhythms, and follows



the adventures of Manolo, a fictitious composite character. Fascinated by the beats and the pulsing energy, Manolo teaches himself how to flow with the music, and goes on to become a breaker with his own crew, the Borinquén. Manolo and other crews burst into the media spotlight as the action segues into the '80s and beyond, appearing in movies and competing in national and international competitions. Bold, highly defined pictures capture the dancers' elasticity and grace in their increasingly complex moves, encouraged by the refrain, "Hip-Hop, y'all, and ya don't stop!" This simple tale is set against the social history of the Bronx, which transformed from an impoverished but populous area into a neglected, rubble-filled urban landscape before hip-hop played a role in its revitalization. This enticing introduction includes an illustrated glossary of footwork, power moves, and routines and is just in time for the upcoming debut of breaking at the 2024 Paris Olympics. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Cinda Meets Ella: A Fairly Queer Tale.

By Wallace West. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 40p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316628372). PreS–Gr. 2.

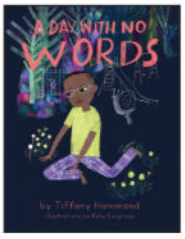
This delightfully fresh, queer, whimsical retelling of Cinderella's story follows outlaw Cinda as her adventures in the Old West are put on hold thanks to the schemes of her evil aunt Hildy and two cousins, who make her do chores and sell away her beloved critter companions. When an exciting invitation to a contest ("Lasso! Race! Surprise challenge!") arrives from the Rancho Del Reina, promising a hefty monetary prize, Hildy snatches the opportunity to compete. Taken with the fashionable and alluring nonbinary Rider, who delivered the invitation, Cinda is inspired to secretly join the contest, as well. In this action-packed, vividly colored story, Cinda aims to win the competition and lasso back her animal pals while also catching the eye of the mysterious Rider. This unique spin on the well-worn fairy tale, featuring unforgettable illustrations from West of a Merrie Hoggmüther and a burlap-bag riding dress, brings this queer happily-ever-after to life in a new way as Cinda aims to regain her old life and win her new love's affections. —*Stephanie Cohen*

A Day with No Words.

By Tiffany Hammond. Illus. by Kate Cosgrove.

May 2023. 48p. Row House/Wheat Penny, $17.99 (9781736949795). PreS–Gr. 3.

In a lovely slice-of-life story, a boy's nonverbal experience is highlighted—and celebrated—as he and his mother spend a typical day together. The boy is autistic, and for him this means he doesn't verbalize orally; instead, he communicates through a tablet, which relays his selected pictures and words. The story is written from the boy's first-person perspective, however—a clever choice in that it gives readers a direct look into his mind and reinforces the book's crucial statement that nonverbal people have as many words and as much intelligence as anyone else. Cosgrove's art, throughout, does an amazing job of transporting readers into his perspective, employing various color tones, metaphoric images, and "camera" angles to reflect the deep expressiveness contained in every page. And this isn't just a stock story about autistic kids; this is a story about one autistic kid, so Hammond makes sure to emphasize his uniqueness, detailing his particular sensory aversions and delights. The challenges are present, as well, with the story illustrating the isolation of not being seen or heard, of being misunderstood or discounted because of a disability. In one particularly affecting scene, the mom fiercely advocates for her son against some rude, ignorant park-goers. But through this book, neurotypicals' eyes will be opened, and everyone in autistic families will feel seen—and heard. —*Ronny Khuri*



The Fairest in the Land.

By Lesléa Newman. Illus. by Joshua Heinsz.

May 2023. 40p. Abrams, $17.99 (9781419757099). K–Gr. 2.

A heartwarming tale from the author of *Heather Has Two Mommies* (2015), this follows friends Annabelle and Benjamin during a day of playing dress-up. When Benjamin gravitates toward all of the traditionally feminine roles, such as a veiled bride or a ballerina in a pink tutu, Annabelle is happy to see her friend having fun, but she's disappointed that she is left with the more traditionally masculine roles and outfits. When Benjamin claims the role of princess, Annabelle speaks up, as she does not feel that the prince role fits her, so Benjamin proposes the marvelous solution of having *two* princesses so they can both have fun and be themselves! Filled with vibrant illustrations and cute animal friends that capture the joy and nostalgia of children playing pretend, Newman's story reminds readers that they are who their imaginations say they are. The fresh bubblegum palette, wonderfully reminiscent of Lisa Frank or Polly Pocket toys, will spark a fresh wave of inspiration for young friends to be their truest selves. —*Stephanie Cohen*

Forever Our Home / Kâkikê kîkinaw.

By Tonya Simpson. Illus. by Carla Joseph. Tr. by Jean Okimāsis.

May 2023. 32p. Orca, $21.95 (9781459837584). PreS–Gr. 2.

Forever Our Home was originally written as a lullaby by the author for her newborn son, and this illustrated book extends its essence to all Indigenous children. Written in both Plains Cree and English, the song addresses children, assuring them of their place among the wondrous flora and fauna of a homeland where the spirits of ancestors can be felt and promising them that a future is secure. The illustrations depict expanses of breathtakingly beautiful landscapes in all the seasons. In these realistic, hand-painted renderings, nature is foregrounded so that the focus is on foxes, hawks, and deer against backdrops of lush meadows abloom with fireweeds and tamaracks and skies alive with sun and clouds, leaving no doubt as to their importance. On some pages, humans are completely absent, and in others they are small figures on the horizon, suggesting humility and connection rather than domination. The back matter and biographical information provide additional context for the message and the art. —*Amina Chaudhri*

The Glow Show.

By Susi Schaefer. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 40p. Sourcebooks/eXplore, $14.99 (9781728261348). PreS–Gr. 2.

Glow is not only a cartoonish, magenta squid with extra-large, expressive eyes and a black bow tie, he's bioluminescent. In this short, simple narrative, he loves to twirl and perform, which makes him shine even brighter for adoring marine-life fans. But when his fish and mollusk friends ask to twirl and glow along with him, even offering lessons in singing, painting, and navigation in exchange, Glow prefers the spotlight for himself and swims up to the shallower, lighter, and more colorful ocean zone. Failing to glow in

this sunnier spot, he then dives down to the ocean's deepest, most isolated zone. When his glow returns, making him easy prey, the squid needs his friends' skills after all, in order to return to their home environment, where he realizes that performing with friends is always better than performing for fans. Childlike illustrations not only lend a playfulness to the friendship theme but also help convey basic ocean science, squid facts, and bioluminescence concepts. Back matter provides similar facts in more detail, keeping the STEM-inspired story light. —*Angela Leeper*

Have You Seen My Invisible Dinosaur?

By Helen Yoon. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536226256). PreS–Gr. 2.

A child's invisible dinosaur has gone missing. The trouble begins after the mud-spattered dinosaur gets a bubble bath; the soiled stomach and legs had been the only visible parts of the pet, whereas a squeaky-clean invisible dinosaur could be hiding anywhere! After the child tries to no avail to coax it back with piles of jam sandwiches, "lost pet" posters go up (with the usual photo space hilariously left blank) but get no response. Inclement weather would help, as snow piles or puddled raindrops could indicate where an enormous dinosaur was standing. Alas, it's a beautiful sunny day in a dandelion-strewn field. But wouldn't you know it—the seeds floating through the air settle into a dinosaur-shaped outline, complete with a jam-stained snout at one end. The clever premise is carried out with heaps of humor and cheer, and the mixed-media illustrations are expressive and comical, including delightful spreads that appear to be the child's crayoned diagrams. A sweetly satisfying story with lots of laughs. —*Emily Graham*

I Am a Tornado.

By Drew Beckmeyer. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 40p. Atheneum, $18.99 (9781665916745). K–Gr. 2.

As an anthropomorphized tornado wreaks havoc, a cow caught and carried along does its best to de-escalate things. In a story relayed via their conversations and Beckmeyer's animated, cut-paper illustrations, Cow notices that Tornado is seemingly unconcerned by the devastation it's causing and continues to try to engage, from showing understanding to seeking a cause for Tornado's upset—but nothing works. Progressively, though, Tornado tuckers out and, size-wise and ill-temper-wise, diminishes while Cow comforts and reassures. Finally, Tornado begins drifting away in wisps across a now-serene setting, with Cow remaining nearby. Though the story is geared toward younger ones, who may enjoy the offbeat pairing of Cow and Tornado and Beckmeyer's use of hyperbole, the scientific facts about tornadoes woven throughout the text will more likely appeal to older picture-book readers, who also may better understand the concepts and need for safety precautions. While the connection between Tornado's bad moods and human emotions isn't totally seamless, the boisterous story does nicely portray the ways intense weather (and moods) will eventually abate. —*Shelle Rosenfeld*

Lali's Flip-Flops.

By Farhana Zia. Illus. by Sephanie Fizer Coleman.

May 2023. 32p. Peachtree, $18.99 (9781682634936); e-book, $11.99 (9781682635131). PreS–Gr. 1.

In this second book about Lali (*Lali's Feather*, 2022), the South Asian girl is on her way to market with money she has earned doing chores. Along the way, she passes Hen, Goat, and Bird, each of whom asks Lali to purchase items for them. In response, "Lali didn't say yes. She didn't say no." Meanwhile, a cumulative onomatopoeic refrain informs readers that the path is uncomfortable on the girl's bare feet: "Puff-puff flew dust. Wibble-wibble wobbled stone. Dhup-dhup went Lali's feet on the twisty-curvy, dusty path." Fittingly, Lali spends her money on flip-flops to make her walk more pleasant. However, upon witnessing her friends' disappointment that she didn't get their requested items, the girl makes amends and is awarded with tea and cake. Coleman's cheerful, digitally-rendered illustrations are brightly hued, and the repetition and sound effects make this tale a good contender for storytimes. —*Maryann Owen*

My Dad Is a Tree.

By Jon Agee. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 40p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, $18.99 (9780593531372). PreS–Gr. 1.

A girl stands serenely, about knee-high, in her yard, arms branching outward, feet rooted to the ground, because, of course, she's pretending to be a tree. Why? "Because a tree gets to stay outside all day long!" When her dad finds out what she's doing, she persuades him to join her. "Just for a minute," he insists, but what follows is a full day of tree-ish shenanigans. As the dad is besieged by various discomforts—birds, bugs, rain, kites—his daughter reassures him that those things don't bother trees, and a hilariously befuddled Dad stays in character. Agee illustrates the story in beautifully simple strokes, employing his trademark style through a softly bright color palette. The consistency of the setting—father and daughter standing as trees beside an actual tree—allows young readers to easily identify Dad's incoming irritants, giving the humor a guaranteed punch. Kids will be tickled by the playful premise and the control exerted by the child over the parent. A fun, funny lap read—but dads beware. —*Ronny Khuri*

The Night before Freedom: A Juneteenth Story.

By Glenda Armand. Illus. by Corey Barksdale.

May 2023. 40p. Crown, $18.99 (9780593567463). PreS–Gr. 2.

Eight-year-old David and his extended family assemble at Grandma's house in Galveston, Texas, eager to hear the matriarch's annual recitation of the story of Juneteenth, the holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S. Her account, as told to her by her own grandmother Mom Bess, describes whispered rumors of freedom finally confirmed by a rider on horseback announcing the news from a scroll. Jubilation, celebration, and plans for a better future follow. Armand's joyful picture book highlights this June 19th observance, now a federal holiday. In capturing the anticipation felt before this holiday, she also invokes some phrases and the meter of Clement Moore's *The Night before Christmas*. Barksdale's vibrant mixed-media artwork uses acrylic, oil, and watercolor pencils on Masonite and employs an abstract expressionist style. Lively patterns appear on clothing, textiles, and the endpapers, and, while facial features are sometimes indistinct, a sense of joy and movement pervades every spread. This makes a good read-aloud; pair with Sojourner Kincaid Rolle's *Free at Last* (2022) to introduce this special day. —*Kay Weisman*

Nothing's Wrong! A Hare, a Bear, and Some Pie to Share.

By Jory John. Illus. by Erin Kraan.

May 2023. 40p. Farrar, $18.99 (9780374312176). PreS–Gr. 1.

A pie that plops, a mood that drops, and a friendship that never stops are the main ingredients of John's latest zany adventure. In this follow-up to 2021's *Something's Wrong*, friends Hare and Bear decide to have a picnic. Hare makes a pie and then takes a walk in the woods as it cools on the windowsill. A heavy rain ensues, and the pie becomes a sodden mess. Hare tries to rescue the picnic with what he can find in the pantry: a can of baked beans, a sprouting potato, a shoelace, a pencil, some yarn, a salt shaker. Ebullient, garrulous Bear shows up, but the thoroughly miserable Hare takes off, refusing to talk. Bear persists, finally getting Hare to open up and, in a hilarious four-page sequence juxtaposing Bear's and Hare's reactions, reveal his sad picnic items. The illustrations, done with woodcut and linocut prints plus colored pencils, create a wonderfully textured, vivid world. A great resolution involves a picnic, many forest animals, and a resounding message about the power of always being there for your friends. —*Connie Fletcher*

Nudi Gill: Poison Powerhouse of the Sea.

By Bonnie Kelso. Illus. by the author.

2023. 32p. Gnome Road, $18.99 (9781957655000). K–Gr. 2.

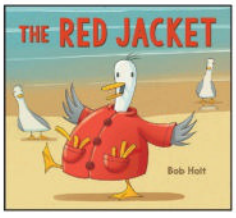
This is a twofer: a story about a little girl going snorkeling and meeting a new friend, Gill, and a nonfiction overview of the little-covered nudibranch, a brightly colored type of sea slug. Boisterous Gill introduces himself to the explorer by telling her the bare facts: "I'm a nudibranch. I am flashy. I am fancy. I am . . . NAKED!" Text bubbles explain that while some other marine creatures have shells, Gill and his ilk lack them. "I am what I eat" is his next exclamation, in response to the girl's observation that he's colorful, with text explaining that, underwater, bright colors warn of poison. "Nudibranchs consume poison, absorbing it into their flesh. Predators that try to eat them get a nasty sting," explains Kelso. Other facts follow, with the friends frolicking while read-

ers absorb the information. Children will enjoy the brightly colored, digitally generated images, which have an animated feel; a bonus is the (labeled) depictions of other types of marine life, which will allow adult readers to extend the learning by discussing more than the starring nudibranch. —*Henrietta Verma*

The Red Jacket.
By Bob Holt. Illus. by the author.

July 2023. 40p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063237605). PreS–Gr. 3.

Bob, a lonely seagull, trudges along the shore. When a songbird offers him a bright red jacket, he's taken aback by the kind offer. The songbird says, "I no longer need it," so Bob happily accepts the jacket, which looks "swanky stylish" and feels "like wearing a big hug." No longer in a slump, he greets the crabs at play, takes time to help a pelican, and calls out to other gulls. When the animals respond, he initially attributes their friendliness to his cool-looking jacket, but after a huge wave washes it away, they loyally retrieve it and give it back to him. And when a sad-looking turtle walks by, he gives his jacket away, saying, "I no longer need it." This picture book features an unassuming main character who discovers the power of kindness. The story is told in concise sentences within speech balloons, and every word is well chosen. The lovable characters' emotions find expression mainly in the appealing, sometimes amusing illustrations, which were drawn in pencil and digitally painted. The cartoonlike look of the art gives the book immediate appeal, and the unexpected details, such as fries in the jacket pockets, are endearing. Fun for reading aloud and fine for discussing. —*Carolyn Phelan*



Snake's Big Mistake.
By Sarah Kurpiel. Illus. by the author.

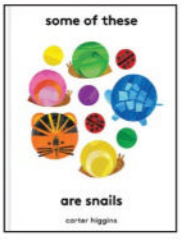
May 2023. 40p. Greenwillow, $19.99 (9780063093218). PreS–Gr. 2.

Ambition, temptation, deception, and lying all follow Snake as he slithers through art class and home in this thought-provoking picture book that shows how lying is a costly mistake. Snake's eventual deception arises from his interest in the latest project in Mr. Owl's art class, the creation of clay pots. Snake's ambition to create a spectacular pot grows with each step of the process, shown engagingly here through cheerful digital illustrations, with the animal students rolling and coiling clay one week, then painting on glaze, and finally, waiting for the pots to return from the kiln. Snake's finished pot turns out to be a misshapen blob, but Mr. Owl mixes up Snake's and his friend Turtle's labels, misidentifying Turtle's beautiful pot as Snake's. Snake stays silent, not correcting Mr. Owl, and then allows his family to praise his purloined pot. Eventually, Snake confesses, trying to make amends and repair his friendship with Turtle, but the power of the story comes from showing how destructive lies and deceit can be. —*Connie Fletcher*

Some of These Are Snails.
By Carter Higgins. Illus. by the author.

May 2023. 52p. Chronicle, $15.99 (9781797220185). PreS–Gr. 2.

Higgins expands her exploration of colors, shapes, and patterns in this companion to *Circle under Berry* (2021). She pairs the simple, rhythmic, occasionally rhyming text with cut-paper collage artwork (hand-painted and digitally enhanced), in which she creates recognizable animals from basic shapes. For example, "turtle is a circle // circle is a snail // green circles / orange circles // circle circle square," depicts the mentioned items in vivid greens and oranges set off against a white background. The concepts and artwork become more complex as the book progresses: "can you sort by color? / can you sort by size? / can you sort by shape / or find the animals with eyes?" invites readers to participate in an "I spy" type of game. Other spreads ask readers to distinguish birds and mice (all pink triangles), compare the number of stripes on a variety of animals, and determine which animal has the most wiggles (curves). Other concepts introduced include comparative sizes, indefinite quantities (all, none, some), and vocabulary of scale ("teeny tiny" versus "huge enormous"). Ideal as a read-aloud, this should have wide appeal: lap-sit toddlers will enjoy the sing-song verses, preschoolers will focus on the shape and color concepts, kindergartners will learn simple ways to draw animals, and emergent readers will appreciate the predictable text. —*Kay Weisman*



The Together Tree.
By Aisha Saeed. Illus. by Leuyen Pham.

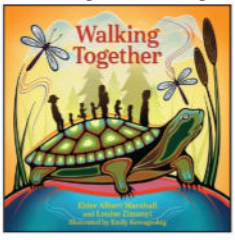
May 2023. 40p. Simon & Schuster, $18.99 (9781534462960). PreS–Gr. 1.

On his first day in a new school, Rumi feels shy and keeps to himself. While the other kids play at recess, he sits alone under a tree. A couple of classmates make fun of Rumi's shoes, which he had decorated with his friends at his former home, and this makes him homesick. One boy gives Rumi an especially hard time and even throws a rock, hitting Rumi in the knee, drawing blood. Up to that point some of the children appeared uneasy with Rumi's treatment and now are unsure what to do. Their remorse is clearly pictured, as is the guilt felt by the rock thrower. Another classmate asks Rumi if they can play together, and when he and the other children see what Rumi has created under the shady tree, they join in his activity. Mixed-media illustrations reveal a multicultural classroom of children, with black-and-white sketches being used to depict the moments of regret and sadness. Ultimately, the way Rumi and the bully form a bond is a wonderful lesson for all readers. —*Maryann Owen*

Walking Together.
By Albert D. Marshall and Louise Zimanyi. Illus. by Emily Kewageshig.

May 2023. 40p. Annick, $18.99 (9781773217765). K–Gr. 2.

It is springtime, and the sun is warming Turtle Island, coaxing life out of its winter slumber. Each page begins with the advice to "walk together in a good way," which means to go about with care and appreciation, and guides readers on how to do so: listen to the wisdom of the Frog and the Hummingbird and pay attention to the gifts of the Waters and Lands that take care of us. They remind us to take care of them so they may remain for future generations. Walking together is also known as Etuaptmumk, or "Two-Eyed Seeing," in which human actions are protective of other living things. The tone of the text is gentle but with an underlying insistence, and if readers need to be convinced of the beauty of the planet, they need look no further than the stunning pages of this book. Scenes of people interacting respectfully with nature are rendered in vibrant colors, with fluid black-and-gold outlines, in a style that is both contemporary and traditional. The afterword provides context for the book's inspiration and creation: the wisdom of Chief Charles Labrador of Acadia First Nation, Nova Scotia. This important, gorgeous book has something for readers of all ages. —*Amina Chaudhri*



Windrush Child: The Tale of a Caribbean Child Who Faced a New Horizon.
By John Agard. Illus. by Sophie Bass.

May 2023. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536228533). PreS–Gr. 2.

Stunning illustrations stand out in this gentle chronicle of immigration. A child's journey from the Caribbean to England on the *Empire Windrush* is told through short verses by poet Agard. The story follows the titular "Windrush child" and their parents as they travel on the ship over vast blue waters with many other people before arriving in England for a new life. Without any prior background information, some young readers may find it challenging to discern what is happening from the minimal lyrical text. After the story ends, the author presents information explaining the Windrush generation, providing much-needed context through brief historical details. Bass creates a vivid backdrop of vibrant gouache and pen illustrations. Through her bright colors and distinctly stylized shapes and figures, Bass enhances the simple stanzas and helps tell the story, including through multiple wordless pages. A visually dazzling picture book that improves with each reading. —*Van McGary*

Spotlight on **Mysteries & Thrillers**

Art from *The Last Girls Standing*, by Jennifer Dugan.

Older Readers

Garden of the Cursed.
By Katy Rose Pool.

June 2023. 352p. Holt, $19.99 (9781250846662). Gr. 9–12.

Marlow Briggs is a cursebreaker: like a magical detective, she seeks out curses and the people who buy and cast them. She frees the targets from the harmful magic—for a fee, of course. A year ago, her mother disappeared, and along with her, Marlow's life with the rich and powerful. When her ex-friend, heir Adrius Falcrest, seeks out her services, Marlow is drawn back into the throngs of the richest and most fashionable people once more. Worse, she has to pretend to date Adrius, whom she used to crush on, in order to get close to solving the mystery of an ancient, outlawed curse. But it's worth it if she can figure out the truth behind her mother's disappearance, too. The mechanics of cursing (each comes from a card, powered by stolen memories and body parts, run through spell shops that often act as pawn shops) adds intriguing layers to the world. Comparisons to Veronica Mars are inevitable but apt. This new series starter from Morris finalist Pool (*There Will Come a Darkness*, 2019) is recommended for any library. —*Stacey Comfort*

Good as Gold.
By Candace Buford.

June 2023. 320p. Disney/Hyperion, $18.99 (9781368090254). Gr. 8–11.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and high-school senior Casey is willing to try anything to keep her Ivy League-plans on track. Her seemingly perfect life is upended when her father loses his job, ousting her from the popular crowd and jeopardizing her ability to afford college tuition. Here the story takes an unexpected twist, as Casey and a group of new friends decide to look for the sunken treasure rumored to exist in their touristy lake town, Langston. Readers will find themselves invested in the progress of the search and its possible outcomes. Buford's contemporary novel engagingly mixes mystery with adventure and buzzes with ethereal elements, but it is anchored in the realistic challenges Casey faces. Her desire to get out of Langston and spread her wings will be relatable to most teens, and her efforts to help ease her family's struggles, form genuine friendships, and go the extra distance to reach her goals glitter brighter than any gold that might be lurking in Langston. —*Aurora Dominguez*

The King Is Dead.
By Benjamin Dean.

July 2023. 384p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316519144). Gr. 9–12.

In this wild ride of a mystery and social commentary, James assumes the role of king and all that it entails after the passing of his father. But being a monarch in the UK is different for James; he's the first Black king, and he has to keep his sexuality a secret. When his boyfriend goes missing and a spiteful tabloid begins hinting at stories only the royal family should know, James races to uncover the leaker and where his boyfriend went. Plenty of readers have royal fever, but Dean adds a new spin by exploring how the public would respond when the ruling monarch doesn't look like previous rulers. Exploring thinly veiled racism and a royal family that trades in secrets, the novel reveals the cracks in a family thrust into the limelight simply by virtue of a birthright. James is a character who will resonate with many readers as he is just finally beginning to discover himself while under immense pressure. With a fast-paced mystery and complex characters, Dean's timely novel will easily win readers over. —*Amber Hayes*

The Last Girls Standing.
By Jennifer Dugan.

Aug. 2023. 320p. Putnam, $18.99 (9780593532072). Gr. 10–12.

When Sloan met Cherry at the start of summer as they both trained to become camp counselors, it was love at first sight. But men in crude animal masks attacked the camp, slaughtering everyone. Months later, Sloan and Cherry, the only survivors, are the subject of intense public focus. Sloan, whose memory of the night is a giant blank, clings to tough, unflappable Cherry, relying on her for safety and to fill in the gaps. Sloan's overbearingly anxious mother pushes Sloan out of her comfort zone, not realizing that Sloan is struggling with her memories and doubting Cherry's version of events. As Sloan begins her own investigation into that terrible day, her mind, already fragile, begins to break down. Dugan, author of queer romances (*Melt with You*, 2022), takes a sharp, but perhaps not ultimately shocking, turn into a thriller that grapples with the loneliness of trauma and the bonds that, for better or for worse, are forged there. The slow spiral to an unsettling, well-earned end will leave readers with much to think about. —*Maggie Reagan*

Lying in the Deep.
By Diana Urban.

May 2023. 384p. Razorbill, $18.99 (9780593527603); paper, $11 (9780593696040). Gr. 9–12.

In her third twisty thriller, Urban (*These Deadly Games*, 2022) takes readers aboard a luxury cruise ship for a locked-room murder mystery. Stanford scholarship student Jade Miller has anticipated her junior fall Semester at Sea for years. But standing on the dock in Amsterdam waiting to board, she is stunned to see Lainey and Silas in line: over the summer, Silas dumped Jade for Lainey, her best friend and daughter of a wealthy pharmaceutical tycoon. (By text!) Jade was hoping to leave her heartbreak behind. Why are they here? And why are they acting like *she* hurt *them*? When Lainey disappears, her room found covered in blood leading to the balcony, suspicion turns on Jade. She has 18 hours to find the killer before they arrive in Gibraltar and outside authorities take over. Several of her new friends and classmates had motives and opportunity, even handsome, quiet Felix, who helps her investigate and to get over Silas. Red herrings and implausibility abound, but great chemistry and entertaining, nonstop turns of plot steer the ship. —*Angela Carstensen*

One of Us Is Back.
By Karen M. McManus.

July 2023. 368p. Delacorte, $19.99 (9780593485019). Gr. 8–12.

The original Bayview Four has officially expanded to the Bayview Crew after the events of the previous book in McManus' best-selling thriller series, and though most of the teens are now navigating the post-high-school reality of jobs, rent payments, and college, revenge-fueled murders are still front and center. Phoebe is struggling to keep a secret that has big ramifications on her family, and with Jake Riordan out of prison on bail, Bronwyn, Nate, Addy, and Cooper are especially apprehensive. Meanwhile, a hacked billboard suggests a new game is afoot, and when people start going missing, the crew is on the case to figure out who's behind it all. McManus keeps the cinematic plotting tight with plenty of twists, red herrings, and long-buried secrets as she entwines the mysteries from the first two books here, and flashback chapters from Jake's and Simon's perspectives add new weight to the proceedings. Readers needn't worry about catching up on the prior installments; McManus helpfully includes enough backstory to keep the story grounded. Another solid thriller from a master of the genre. —*Sarah Hunter*

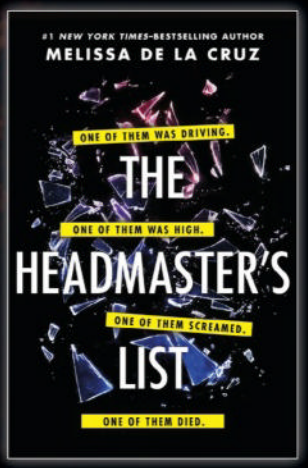
HD **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** McManus' books, especially in this series, are regulars on the best-seller lists, and the TV series only heightens the appeal.

Ride or Die.
By Gail-Agnes Musikavanhu.

June 2023. 384p. Soho Teen, $18.99 (9781641294201). Gr. 8–11.

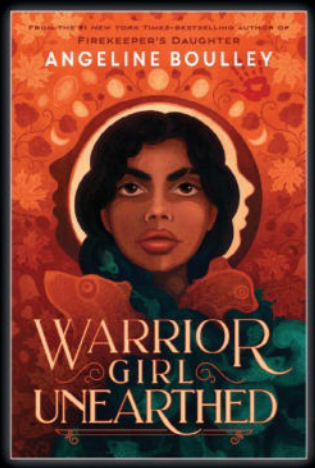
Loli Crawford has had it with humdrum days. Admittedly, she thrives on chaos to off-

GRIPPING YOUNG ADULT THRILLERS AND MYSTERIES



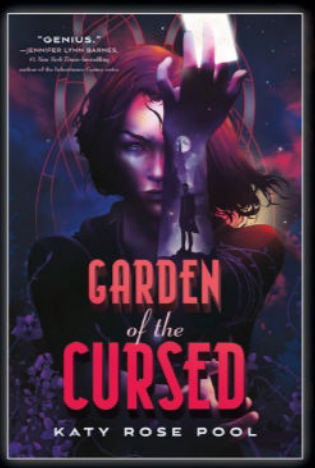
HC 9781250827388 | Available Now

One of Us Is Lying meets *Riverdale* in this edge-of-your-seat thriller from #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Melissa de la Cruz.



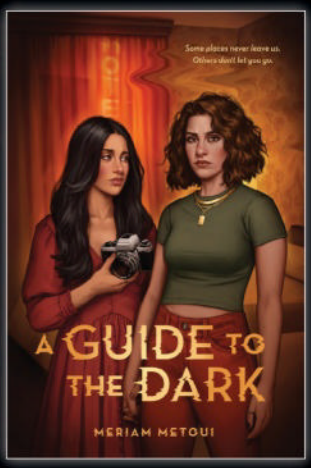
HC 9781250766588 | Available Now

A high-stakes thriller about the power of discovering your stolen history from #1 *New York Times* bestseller Angeline Boulley.



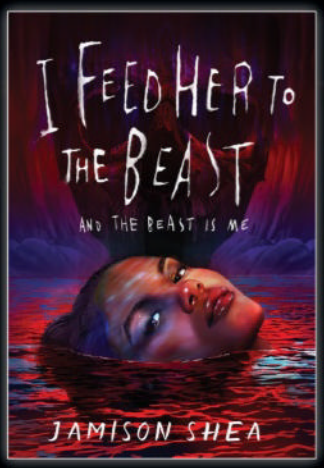
HC 9781250846662 | On Sale 6.20.23

From Morris Award finalist Katy Rose Pool comes a swoonworthy enemies-to-lovers mystery set in a lush new fantasy world.



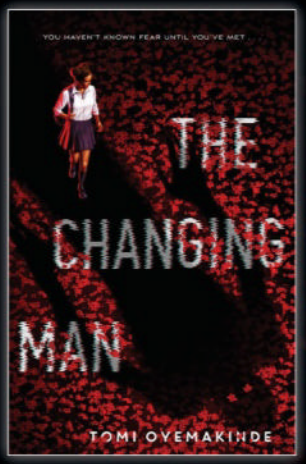
HC 9781250865218 | On Sale 7.18.23

A spine-chilling thriller about the ghosts we carry with us, from debut author Meriam Metoui.



HC 9781250909565 | On Sale 8.29.23

From debut author Jamison Shea comes a thrilling dark fantasy that follows an elite dancer through her descent into villainy.



HC 9781250868138 | On Sale 9.26.23

Debut author Tomi Oyemakinde explores identity in this speculative thriller that is perfect for fans of *Ace of Spades* and Jordan Peele.

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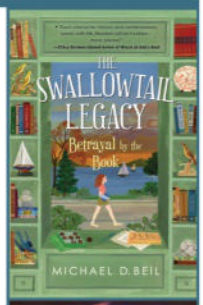
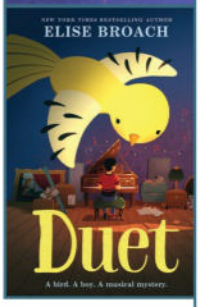
Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers for Youth





New takes on classic genre tropes alongside meaningful explorations of identity and justice mark many of these top 10 mysteries and thrillers for youth, reviewed in Booklist between May 1, 2022, and April 15, 2023. —*Sarah Hunter*

Betrayal by the Book. By Michael D. Beil. Illus. by Torborg Davern. 2023. Pixel+Ink, $17.99 (9781645950509). Gr. 5–7.

When a writer is found dead on Swallowtail Island, 12-year-old Lark is on the scene, determined to discover the murderer in this thoroughly engaging mystery.

Bianca Torre Is Afraid of Everything. By Justine Pucella Winans. 2023. Clarion, $18.99 (9780358721642). Gr. 9–12.

In this witty, campy whodunit, a reclusive teen accidentally witnesses a murder by way of their bird-watching telescope and gets drawn into finding the killer.

Duet. By Elise Broach. Illus. by Ziyue Chen. 2022. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $16.99 (9780316311359). Gr. 3–6.

While a boy plays a Chopin piece on the piano, a goldfinch sings along, creating an enchanted, inspiring moment. Together, they seek out one of the composer's mysteriously missing Pleyel pianos.

How to Live without You. By Sarah Everett. 2022. Clarion, $18.99 (9780358256229). Gr. 10–12.

When her sister, Rose, goes missing, Emmy flies across the country on a determined search to find her in this mystery that sensitively spotlights teen mental health.

Into the Light. By Mark Oshiro. 2023. Tor Teen, $19.99 (9781250812254). Gr. 9–12.

When Manny is adopted out of the foster system, his new family's religious zeal proves a sinister force that pushes him away. He returns, though, when he hears of a dead body near their camp and wonders whether it's his sister.

Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone. By Tae Keller. 2022. Random, $17.99 (9780593310526). Gr. 4–7.

When new kid Jennifer Chan, who believes in aliens, goes missing, her sometimes-friend, sometimes-bully Mallory sets out to find her and has to reckon with her own involvement in the disappearance.

Liar's Beach. By Katie Cotugno. 2023. Delacorte, $18.99 (9780593433287). Gr. 8–11.

This modernization of an Agatha Christie classic, set on Martha's Vineyard, features a teenage girl in the role of Hercule Poirot, a mystery warped by biases, and a house full of secrets.

Promise Boys. By Nick Brooks. 2023. Holt, $18.99 (9781250866974). Gr. 9–12.

The murder of a prep-school principal and the suspects, three of his most promising students, are at the center of this gripping, multi-voiced whodunnit, which doesn't shy away from depicting society's implicit and overt prejudices.

The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels. By Beth Lincoln. Illus. by Claire Powell. 2023. Dutton, $17.99 (9780593533239). Gr. 5–7.

While on the hunt for an ancestor's hidden treasure, mischief-making Shenanigan Swift becomes entangled in a classic manor-house murder mystery alongside her chaotic family. Plot twists and wordplay abound in this madcap story.

What Happened to Rachel Riley? By Claire Swinarski. 2023. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $16.99 (9780063213098). Gr. 5–8.

Told through emails, texts, and podcast interviews, Swinarski's novel follows introverted Anna Hunt, whose investigation into an eighth-grade secret reveals a culture of sexual harassment at her new school.

set boredom, and she's roped her best friend, Ryan, into some extreme adventures—like the car surfing that got Loli's driving privileges (of her brand-new Porsche!) revoked, and now, throwing the sickest party Woolridge High has ever seen just to get back a stolen necklace. Loli thinks she's met her match when, in a dark closet at the party, she meets a stranger (dubbed X) who suggests they keep their anonymity while daring each other to complete missions. But as the tasks get more reckless, Loli has to figure out if losing her life and her friendships are worth the thrills. Musikavanhu's debut has an exciting premise and plenty of high jinks, though Loli's self-proclaimed arrogance coupled with her brazenness about her financial status can be alienating. The high-school nostalgia, though, is spot on. A curated music playlist, entertaining banter, and fast twists will have thrill-seekers invested enough to see the story through to the end. —*Mahjabeen Syed*

The Shadow Sister.
By Lily Meade.

June 2023. 350p. Sourcebooks/Fire, $18.99 (9781728264479). Gr. 9–12.

In Meade's debut, sisters Casey and Sutton have a difficult relationship that goes beyond sibling rivalry. Then Sutton goes missing and, when she returns, has memories only of her sister. But something beyond Sutton's limited memory isn't right, and everyone is determined to get to the bottom of Sutton's mysterious disappearance. Unsettling to an excellent, haunting effect, *The Shadow Sister* makes the most of tone and atmosphere with prose that seems straightforward at first glance but buzzes with tension. In a book that keeps readers guessing, Meade harnesses generational and personal trauma to paint a stunning story while weaving in themes around religion, family, and privilege—the sisters' father is a Black historian, and Sutton is not the first Black girl to go missing in the neighborhood. Incorporating hoodoo and root magic, this creeping narrative avoids getting into the weeds of these practices while still allowing their clear impact on the events of the story to be seen. Readers who enjoy domestic dramas will be sated as the book examines various relationships made complicated by the new dynamics introduced by Sutton's return and uncharacteristic behavior. All of this is underscored by a complex sibling relationship that evolves over the course of the novel. Hand this unique and quiet horror novel to fans of *Beware the Wild* (2014) and *House of Hollow* (2021). —*Abby Hargreaves*

Stars, Hide Your Fires.
By Jessica Best.

July 2023. 304p. Quirk, $18.99 (9781683693512). Gr. 8–11.

This intergalactic murder-mystery debut introduces Cass, 18, a con artist who lives on a

Continued on p.56

Booklist Trend Alert

Crime Is in the Air(waves)

by Maggie Reagan

More than just a collection of novels that incorporate elements of the seemingly indefatigable true-crime podcast format into their narrations, these recent YA titles turn a critical eye to that format itself. Podcasts like *My Favorite Murder* and *Crime Junkie*—and those are just the tip of the iceberg—have garnered millions of monthly downloads and spawned fan clubs, catchphrases, and merchandise. But amid all that buzz, what often gets lost is that these are real cases about real people, many recent enough that the people connected to them are still alive.

While the true-crime-podcast trend shows no sign of slowing down, neither does this trend of YA thrillers that feature characters who are not only caught up in mysteries of their own but grappling with the very nature of those mysteries.

The Box in the Woods. By Maureen Johnson. 2021. 400p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, $18.99 (9780063032606). Gr. 9–12.

In this standalone spinoff of the Truly Devious novels, teen-detective Stevie Bell arrives at Camp Sunny Pines to investigate a cold case—the gruesome quadruple murder of four teenagers in the seventies—and help an overeager camp director craft a podcast. Faced with living people affected by murder, Stevie confronts the complex truths of her work.

Delicious Monsters. By Liselle Sambury. 2023. 512p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $21.99 (9781665903493). Gr. 9–12.

Daisy, who can see ghosts, and her mom inherit a mansion; 10 years in the future, podcast host Brittney and her partner, Jayden, investigate the same mansion for an episode in their ghost-story YouTube show. The two narratives ultimately collide in a haunting revelation, and this complex, multifaceted story unpacks different types of abuse.

Girl Forgotten. By April Henry. 2023. 272p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $18.99 (9780316322591). Gr. 9–12.

While coping with her mother's recent death, Piper, a true-crime enthusiast, fixates on the unsolved murder of Layla Trello 17 years ago, starting a podcast to track her investigation and even going so far as to move to the town where Layla died. Soon, she's getting death threats herself.

I Hope You're Listening. By Tom Ryan. 2020. 368p. Albert Whitman, $17.99 (9780807535080). Gr. 8–11.

Left behind as a child when her friend was kidnapped from their tree fort, Delia now channels her past trauma into her podcast, *Radio Silent*, which dedicates itself to finding others who have gone missing.

I Killed Zoe Spanos. By Kit Frick. 2020. 384p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $18.99 (9781534449701). Gr. 9–12.

This thriller, inspired by Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, is relayed through a purposefully bewildering narrative that zips back and forth in time and includes podcast transcripts. Zoe, a girl from the Hamptons, was murdered; her friend's podcast covers the case. Anna, fascinated by the podcast, has confessed—but her confession has holes.

A Long Stretch of Bad Days. By Mindy McGinnis. 2023. 368p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, $17.99 (9780063230361). Gr. 9–12.

In the 1990s, the town of Henley had "a long stretch of bad days": one week with a tornado, flash flood, and the town's sole homicide. In the present day, perfect Lydia Chass is forced to team up with Bristal Jamison, her opposite, to produce a podcast about that week, which leads both to question their family's legacies.

Nothing More to Tell. By Karen M. McManus. 2022. 368p. Delacorte, $19.99 (9780593175903). Gr. 8–11.

Four years ago, three students were discovered with the body of a teacher at Saint Ambrose high school, though they were never accused of a crime. Now, they're all seniors, and scholarship student Brynn, also a senior, nabs an internship at true-crime podcast *Motive* with the pitch that she'll investigate the cold case—and her three fellow students.

The Possible. By Tara Altebrando. 2017. 304p. Bloomsbury, $17.99 (9781619638051). Gr. 9–12.

More than a decade after Kaylee's mom was convicted of murdering her infant son—Kaylee's younger brother—a hit investigative podcast picks up her case. As the podcast and the public start prying into Kaylee's past, her life is ripped apart by gossip, secrets, and a mother she barely remembers.

Sadie. By Courtney Summers. 2018. 320p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $17.99 (9781250105714). Gr. 9–12.

Teenager Sadie sets out to bring her sister's killer to justice while a true-crime podcaster arrives in her dead-end hometown to follow her. Podcast transcripts alternate with Sadie's first-person narration, and the dual perspectives offer incisive commentary on the ethics of true crime and how class affects murder investigations.

Continued from p.54

desolate moon on the edge of the Helia Empire. Cass and her sick dad are barely scraping by when she learns of the Ascension Ball, where Emperor Hyperion's successor will be announced. Audaciously lying her way in, she steals enough jewelry to set up her found family back home for life. Then the Emperor is found dead and Cass is framed for his murder. Desperate, she teams up with beautiful rebel-leader Amaris to find the killer. They uncover a political conspiracy involving clones, a royal affair, and a prince with a knack for poisons. A clever, lighthearted tone and the banter-filled attraction between Cass and Amaris balance off-the-page violence and dark intentions, all set in a world where they/them pronouns are used as a matter of course. Cass' transformation from self-centered thief to brave rebel motivated by a higher purpose is satisfying and inspiring, concluding this action-packed novel with an emotional call for equality and change. —*Angela Carstensen*

This Is the Way the World Ends.
By Jen Wilde.

May 2023. 272p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250827975); paper, $10.99 (9781250827982). Gr. 9–12.

A party at the end of the world is the center of Wilde's debut YA novel. An outsider in more ways than one, Waverly is a scholarship student at her glitzy prep school for the richest kids in New York City; she's also autistic. When her friend Caroline asks her to attend the school's masquerade ball in disguise, Waverly agrees—mostly in the hope of seeing her ex-girlfriend, the dean's daughter Ash. However, the glamorous party quickly turns sinister as Waverly gets lost in one of the party's psychedelic mazes, overhears a conversation about a conspiracy, and witnesses a murder. More than that, Waverly discovers that the whole world is at stake: a global catastrophe is happening outside the walls of the masquerade, and the rich people inside are part of a plan to take advantage of the disaster. This thriller set in a world of extreme privilege with a compelling autistic heroine and her circle of friends trying to save everyone will appeal widely. —*Marija Lukic*

We Don't Swim Here.
By Vincent Tirado.

May 2023. 320p. Sourcebooks/Fire, $18.99 (9781728250809); paper, $11.99 (9781728280103). Gr. 9–12.

Seventeen-year-old Bronwyn and her parents move to her father's hometown for a year when her grandmother, Lala, goes into hospice. Bronwyn, a competitive swimmer, is stunned to learn that all the pools in town have been drained and locked up. Even the lake is off-limits. Everyone seems to be following a secret set of rules, and her cousin Anais won't explain anything. Bronwyn finally learns that the town is haunted by a vengeful ghost, but when she literally falls into the truth, she is sympathetic rather than terrified. The ghost, Sweetie, is lingering after she was killed in a horrific act of racism, and apart from the tourists that disappear every 10 years, Sweetie only pursues the people who hurt and killed her. Bronwyn and Anais take turns narrating the first-person chapters, giving the reader varied perspectives on the plot. Tirado builds the suspense gradually until Bronwyn learns the truth; after that, the tension skyrockets. Both Bronwyn and Anais are sympathetic characters, and secondary personalities are sharply drawn, with all contributing to the plot. —*Donna Scanlon*

We'll Never Tell.
By Wendy Heard.

May 2023. 320p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $18.99 (9780316482332). Gr. 9–12.

We'll Never Tell is a massively successful YouTube channel featuring an anonymous group of teens who thrill their one million followers by filming themselves breaking into off-limits locations throughout L.A. As they prepare to finish senior year and move away for college and work, Casey (trivia whiz), Jacob (editor and aspiring voice actor), Eddie (film enthusiast), and Zoe (coder and lockpicker) decide to sign off with one last epic break-in. Unfortunately, midway through their exploration of the notorious Valentini "murder house," Jacob gets stabbed in the chest. With the police on the way, the group has no choice but to leave him behind. In the aftermath, they struggle to keep their stories and relationships from falling apart. Multiple characters are queer, and the majority of the larger cast is white except Eddie, who is coded as Asian American, and Zoe, whose mother is from the Philippines. Secrets, lies, cover-ups, and betrayals are expertly interwoven by Heard, who makes liberal use of red herrings to surprise readers and bring the novel to a heart-pounding conclusion. —*Rob Bittner*

Where Echoes Die.
By Courtney Gould.

June 2023. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $18.99 (9781250825797); e-book, $10.99 (9781250825711). Gr. 8–12.

After their mother's death, serious, responsible 17-year-old Beck Birsching sets out with her lively younger sister, Riley, to discover what kept calling their mother from Washington to the small desert town of Backravel, Arizona. Despite Ellery Birsching's extensive investigation, Beck still doesn't understand the lure, but a letter that arrives after Ellery's death becomes a catalyst for finally figuring it out. Meanwhile, the more Beck and Riley try to protect and help each other, the clearer it becomes that they need conflicting things. In eerie, dreamlike Backravel, Beck starts to dig, eventually coming face to face with her mother's discoveries. Flashbacks create an atmosphere of pulse-pounding suspense as readers alternate between Beck's mother slipping away and Backravel reeling Beck in, and a slow-burn sapphic romance is tender, well paced, and emotional. Gould provides an acknowledgment of the impossibility of staying still despite the inevitability of death and an exploration of the ways in which grief makes us vulnerable that is at once universal and highly specific. Imaginative and unexpectedly resonant. —*Allie Stevens*

Wolfpack.
By Amelia Brunskill.

June 2023. 272p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316494557). Gr. 8–12.

Within the commune of Havenwood, where all should remain orderly, a mystery emerges. Told in verse from the vantage point of eight teenage girls (ages 14–18), the novel details the search for their missing ninth comrade, Rose. Removed from the outside world, the denizens at Havenwood work as a team under the guidance of their leader, Joseph. Though not related, the young women are as close as sisters and ever ready to defend one another. As they work to solve the puzzle of what happened to Rose, aspects of the missing teen's wanton nature are raised, leading the others to suspect a love affair or possible conspiracy. One thing is certain: these ferocious girls will do whatever it takes to keep their system intact. Brunskill's atmospheric second novel places an emphasis on nature and friendships within a cult setting. Characters' loyalties are put to the test as they are left to question whom to trust. Fans of psychological whodunits will appreciate the less common format of the text, which effectively draws in readers. —*Beronica Garcia*

You're Not Supposed to Die Tonight.
By Kalynn Bayron.

June 2023. 350p. Bloomsbury YA, $19.99 (9781547611546). Gr. 8–10.

Seventeen-year-old Charity Curtis doesn't have a typical summer job. She works at a horror camp, and she's recently been promoted to "final girl," which also elevates her into a coveted managerial role. Things are going great at the camp until Charity's coworkers start disappearing. At first, Charity chalks this up to normal employee attrition, but soon strange things start to happen, quickly turning her dream job into a real-life horror movie. Charity must make sure that her role as "final girl" holds true in real life. In this latest novel, Bayron (*My Dear Henry*, 2023) integrates the traditional conventions of a slasher novel with the story of a queer, Black girl protagonist who subverts the trope of "Black people dying first." Bayron's foray into the YA horror space helps continue the effort of decentering whiteness in the genre. The overall campiness of the novel will appeal to fans of '90s horror films and makes the book as fun as it is terrifying. —*Nashae Jones*

Middle Readers

Epic Ellisons: Cosmos Camp.
By Lamar Giles. Illus. by Morgan Bissant.

May 2023. 288p. HarperCollins/Versify, $18.99 (9780358423379). Gr. 5–7.

Stepping out of supporting roles in Giles' Legendary Alston Boys novels, the 12-year-old Ellison twins find themselves at odds and in danger after Wiki, the one with perfect recall and good social skills, is suddenly invited to join her awesomely brilliant but insecure gadgeteer sister, Leen, at a STEM summer camp sponsored by Petey Thunkle, the world's richest

technocrat. Even fans accustomed to the author's distinctively screwy premises are in for a wild ride as not only has Thunkle disappeared just weeks before the scheduled launch of his mighty Interstellar-Z rocket but also Wiki is suddenly beset with weirdly conflicting sets of memories. Both situations turn out to be related, and their last-tick resolution is complicated by corporate spies and guilty techno secrets. Despite some friction (they had both been looking forward to a bit of separation), Leen and Wiki make a great team, and watching them in action as they work on their own relationship while simultaneously averting cosmic catastrophe juices up the emotional resonance as well as the action in this epic exploit. —*John Peters*

Falling Out of Time.

By Margaret Peterson Haddix.

May 2023. 352p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, $19.99 (9780063251618). Gr. 4–7.

Life in the year 2193 is easy for Zola. She doesn't have to worry about food or clothes because she has her Insta-Fridge and Insta-Closet that will get her what she needs at a moment's notice. Traveling can be done from the comfort of her home with her VR goggles. This is the existence that Zola has always known, but her life turns upside down when she discovers a note hidden in her Insta-Closet that tempts her to go looking for answers. Her search leads her to the name Jessie Keyser, and she is shocked to find out the connection between the two of them. The more she uncovers, the more she sees that her utopian world is not all that it seems. Almost 30 years later, Haddix has created an exhilarating follow-up to her popular *Running Out of Time* that is now centered around futuristic technological advancements. Longtime fans of the first book and newcomers alike will enjoy the thrills and twists here. —*Michelle Ortega*

The Islands of Elsewhere.

By Heather Fawcett.

June 2023. 224p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, $17.99 (9780593530528). Gr. 3–6.

Fawcett weaves a fantastical tale that follows the three Snolly sisters—Hattie, Plum, and Bee—as they embark on the adventure of a lifetime during a seaside summer at their grandfather's house in Misty Cove. A magical feeling permeates the air around Granddaddy's home, which is a stark contrast to the sadness the girls feel about his deteriorating physical state. With all the local talk of magic, faeries, and "in-between" worlds—referring to the three "Fairy Islands" neighboring Misty Cove—10-year-old Bee decides to seek a solution for the grandfather they all love, setting events into motion that cause the sisters to get more enmeshed with the secrets of the Fairy Islands, in the process exposing buried treasure and stolen history that could rock the quaint seaside town. Fawcett's poignant story about imaginary worlds and very real problems, with its tongue-in-cheek nostalgic narration, is perfect for fans of Catherynne M. Valente and magical mysteries. —*Stephanie Cohen*

The Jules Verne Prophecy.

By Larry Schwarz and Iva-Marie Palmer.

June 2023. 368p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $16.99 (9780316349819). Gr. 5–8.

Jet off to Paris and the peculiar world of Jules Verne fanatics in this fun middle-grade adventure set against the backdrop of a summer class dedicated to the famous sf writer. Owen, an American kid, is spending the summer in Paris, but after a very old book falls on his head, he and his friends Nas and Rose get sucked into solving the mystery of a prophesy left by Verne himself. The plot engagingly explores some Parisian landmarks and draws the readers into Verne's world. Owen's American antics are perfectly juxtaposed with those of his friends, who offer their own lived experiences as resident Rich Kid and a Libyan living in France. Full of larger-than-life twists (including a kidnapped parent, evil schemes, and police chases) this novel perfectly pairs real-life city adventures with a literary puzzle for the ages. Fans of puzzle games, fast-paced adventures with short chapters, and movies like *Uncharted* will devour this book. —*Aryssa Damron*

The Mystery of the Radcliffe Riddle.

By Taryn Souders.

July 2023. 288p. Sourcebooks/Young Readers, $15.99 (9781728275468); paper, $7.99 (9781728271415). Gr. 5–7.

The possibility that oblique clues on an eighteenth-century sampler might lead to buried treasure and save Grady from losing his and his widower father's home spurs him and his contentious, inseparable friends Clemmie and Thad into a hunt. Keeping the quest secret proves not only challenging in tiny Gifton, Georgia, but dangerous, too, as a mysterious someone is also on the hunt—leaving a local antique shop in a shambles and accidental corpses in their wake. That shadowy rival adds suspense, but readers will also be drawn in by watching the three sleuths learn to interpret the sampler's message bit by bit, which leads them at last to an awesome, bona fide treasure. It's not one, alas, that will solve Grady's problem, but in service to a properly satisfying ending, the author slips in an unexpected reprieve for him and his father plus, as a bit of historical "gold" for her audience, a closing account of the little-known War of Jenkins' Ear. —*John Peters*

The Night Raven.

By Johan Rundberg. Tr. by A. A. Prime.

Aug. 2023. 192p. Amazon Crossing, $17.99 (9781662509582). Gr. 6–8.

Set in Stockholm during the bitterly cold winter of 1880, this dark, intricate story features Mika, a 12-year-old girl. Left at an orphanage as an infant, she now helps the younger children when she's not working at a bar. Detective Valdemar Hoff recruits Mika after reading a constable's report that records her keen observations. Informally deputized, she agrees to help him solve a mystery involving a serial killer who was active years earlier, captured, and supposedly put to death. Now rumors suggest that "the Night Raven lives." It's a terrifying prospect since his victims appear to have had ties to Mika's orphanage. Rundberg creates an utterly convincing, consistently grim setting during a winter so cold that the orphans can barely collect enough firewood to keep from freezing. Dinner means watery gruel again, and Mika's dark humor includes references to cannibalism. Originally published in Sweden, the novel ends with justice done and, for Mika, a newfound sense of purpose. While not every mystery introduced is solved, this is only the first volume in the Moonwind Mysteries series. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Swept Away: Ruth Mornay and the Unwanted Clues.

By Natalie Hyde.

2023. 200p. Cormorant/DCB, paper, $14.95 (9781770866898). Gr. 6–8.

Ruth lives among her six older siblings, feeling like she'll never stand out in her village of Pinkerton. The only person who takes her seriously is her old neighbor, Bea—until Bea's untimely death. With more questions than answers about the event, Ruth teams up with Bea's godson and a persnickety pet chicken, following a set of strange clues. But what price will Ruth pay to keep Bea's secrets safe, and what dangers are in her sleepy village? Hyde pens an adventure with a timeless feel about a girl searching for her place in the world. While the chicken hilariously steals many scenes, Ruth emerges as a true protagonist as she breaks into buildings like the church, finding unlikely historical artifacts. Quirky characters and beautiful imagery make the village of Pinkerton feel alive, and hopefully the setting will lend itself to future books. Recommended for fans of summertime adventures, impossible puzzles, and lost histories. —*Rachel Smithline*

Truly, Madly, Sheeply.

By Heather Vogel Frederick.

Aug. 2023. 352p. Simon & Schuster, $17.99 (9781534499683). Gr. 5–8.

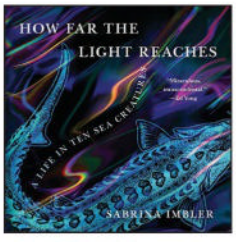
More than a year after the events in *Absolutely Truly* (2014), 13-year-old Truly Lovejoy and her family are comfortably settled into the small town of Pumpkin Falls, New Hampshire, along with her grandparents and aunt True. During True's honeymoon, Truly and her grandparents are living on the farm that the newlyweds recently purchased and tending their flock of sheep. When a series of minor pranks escalates from annoying to destructive and threatening, her grandparents contact the police, while Truly calls her eighth-grade classmates in the PFPE (Pumpkin Falls Private Eyes) into action once again. In the inviting first-person narrative, Truly struggles to deal with the flattering but puzzling attention of two boys at once, while trying to master new skills she never expected to learn, from sheep herding to lock picking. Frederick gracefully fills in the backstory as needed. The third book in the Pumpkin Falls Mystery series offers an engaging portrayal of the Lovejoy family, their unusual traditions, and their close ties to their community. A cozy mystery. —*Carolyn Phelan*

How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures.

By Sabrina Imbler. Read by the author.

2022. 5.5hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781549187056).

Imbler makes both print and audio debuts with a spectacular collection of essays that spotlight the lives of 10 remarkable sea creatures whose existences somehow parallel Imbler's defining experiences as a mixed-race Chinese American queer writer navigating challenging environments. Imbler recalls her adolescence into early adulthood through the pet goldfish whose life is truncated in a tiny bowl, but shows remarkably adaptive growth and longevity. She examines the legacy of her mother's complicated relationship with food by documenting a purple octopus—deemed "mother of the year" in the animal kingdom by Reuters—who starved herself over 53 months to protect her eggs. Investigations into sperm whales contain the vestiges of a doomed college relationship. Researching hybrid butterflyfish is not unlike looking into her own self. She explores her grandmother's survival, despite genocide, through the history of the Chinese sturgeon. From yeti crabs seeking safe havens to sand strikers misnamed the bobbit worm (after the John and Lorena Bobbitt case), Imbler proves to be an extraordinary storyteller while interrogating racism, sexism, sexual abuse, gender identity, and familial relationships. She reads with controlled awareness, deftly illuminating without over-emoting or underperforming. Imbler's background as a science journalist has heightened her observation skills, providing extraordinary insight into creatures both familiarly quotidian and profoundly rare—including her very self. —*Terry Hong*



Isha, Unscripted.

By Sajni Patel. Read by Mehr Dudeja.

2023. 8.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593632192).

Books about single South Asian American women stifled by conservative, demanding parents while living at home without marriage prospects (unless an unwanted arrangement looms) have become an undeniably best-selling trend. Patel's latest doesn't waver from established success, aurally, energetically boosted by relative newbie Dudeja (apparently succeeding usual South Asian–fave Soneela Nankani, who has narrated every other Patel novel thus far). In embodying Isha and her extended family, Dudeja effortlessly showcases an impressive range of accents and emotions with exacting, entertaining multigenerational spin. Yep, Isha's back in her childhood room. She's jobless and, according to her parents, futureless if she keeps up this obsession with scriptwriting. Too bad her agent just dumped her, too. Isha's only support—and maybe her only friend—is younger cousin Rohan who—oh, no!—dreams of being a chef. The outcast duo gets caught up in a wild scheme to track down Isha's old professor—yes, *that* Matthew McConaughey—in hopes of making Hollywood connections. Along the way, Isha might have an inadvertent chance at falling in love. Dudeja ensures a cinematic adaptation. —*Terry Hong*

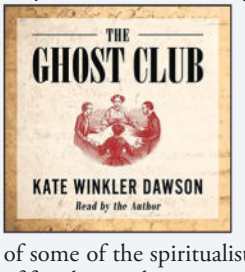
True Crime on Audio

Ghost Club.

By Kate Winkler Dawson. Read by the author.

2023. 4 hr. Books on Tape, DD.

Such cultural luminaries as Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his wife, Harry Houdini, and William Butler Yeats were all members of an illustrious London club that delved into reported ghost sightings and investigated a number of ways to commune with the dead. This audio original by the podcaster behind *Tenfold More Wicked* and *Wicked Words* is a straightahead narration about this longstanding and eerie club, examining the unexplained and uncanny as well as the dubious nature of some of the spiritualists who were all too able to take advantage of family members grieving for lost loved ones, especially in times of war. Dawson has a pleasant voice for narration and is skilled at using careful phrasing in order to make quotes written in florid Victorian style easy to parse for modern listeners. Only available on audio, this will be a popular title for listeners of the author's podcasts, fans of *Lore*, and those interested in historical pseudoscience, scams, and otherworldly intrigue. —*Heather Booth*

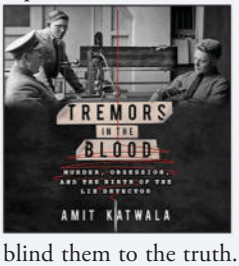


Tremors in the Blood: Murder, Obsession, and the Birth of the Lie Detector.

By Amit Katwala. Read by Paul Bellantoni.

2023. 10.5hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666629187).

Any true-crime fan worth their salt knows that lie detectors are mostly useless in court but are frequently used by law enforcement to rule out suspects and intimidate less forensic-savvy persons of interest. This fascinating audio examines the development and early use (and misuse) of the lie detector, with an emphasis on the lives of three main players in its conception and popularization. John Larson, a scientist/detective eager for an alternative to the abusive "third degree," built on existing science to create the machine which he wished to test in a controlled, scientific manner . . . before his superior officer rushed it into use in casework. Enter a local showman who makes a fortune popularizing the machine nationally, and the die is cast for wrongful exonerations, wrongful convictions, and even wrongful executions. Narrator Paul Bellantoni, a stage actor and prolific voice-over artist, presents the work in a fast-paced, authoritative tone that suits the almost 100-year-old story of men who allow their pursuit of justice to blind them to the truth. An interesting and in-depth look at good intentions gone bad, highly recommended for true-crime fans and near-history buffs alike. —*Jennifer Kinnavy*

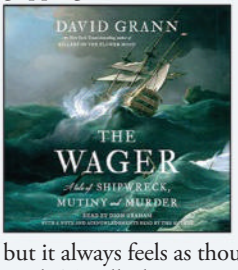


The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder.

By David Grann. Read by Dion Graham and the author.

Apr. 2023. 8.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780307747518).

Grann's most recent thrilling historical deep dive is a tight but gripping account of a shipwreck that reveals (through the author's thorough examination of logs, letters, and official documents) a complex and sinister story of betrayal, survival, and brutality. The audio is as tightly produced as the tale, feeling clean and polished without being overproduced. Dion Graham has a soothing but authoritative baritone that fits the work nicely. His characterization of the real-life figures in the tale has some color, but it always feels as though it's coming strictly from the truth of the work. Tonally, he transitions smoothly from professorial to dynamic; he maintains all the suspense of the narrative yet stays rooted in historical authenticity. This audio gifts listeners with all the emotional weight of these events while always reminding us that the real horror lies in the fact that they are true. —*Adam Schulmerich*



Spotlight on **Mysteries & Thrillers**

Art from *Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderer.*

All That Is Mine I Carry with Me.
By William Landay. Read by a full cast.
2023. 11hr. Brilliance, DD (9781469227320).

November 1975. Mother of three Jane Larkin goes missing, irreparably changing the lives of her family. The situation divides loyalties and forever corrupts the relationships of Jane's children, as the younger two believe their father is guilty but the oldest child does not. Forty years later, the case remains unsolved, and a writer friend of the family investigates. The story is told in four parts and the different narrators add psychological suspense to the intricately plotted story line. While the missing-person case is critical to the plot, the introspection of the characters drives the story. The open-ended conclusion is thought-provoking, encouraging listeners to consider the nature of parental and familial relationships. Readers of Oyinkan Braithwaite and Mary Kubica will enjoy the tonal quality and unique characterizations. As the narrators change, so do the characters' perceptions of each other, giving the listener a multifaceted experience of this moving family saga. —*Shoshana Frank*

Before We Were Innocent.
By Ella Berman. Read by Jennifer Jill Araya.
Apr. 2023. 11hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593675380).

Ten years after a fateful trip to Greece during which Bess and Joni were "persons of interest" in the death of their friend Evangeline, Joni shows up on Bess's doorstep. She asks for a favor that will stir up memories of that dark summer, forcing Bess to take a closer look at their shared history and friendship. Araya, 2022 Audie award-winning narrator of Mary Kubica's *Local Woman Missing,* narrates Berman's sophomore novel. Her smooth, polished, and believable narration immerses readers in this intricately plotted tale of friendships and secrets. She transitions easily between characters and skillfully paces the narration to build tension and suspense. Recommend this audio to fans who enjoy "we used to be friends"–themed suspense like Jane Green's *The Friends We Keep* (2019) or Phoebe Morgan's *The Wild Girls* (2022) —*Melissa Wheelock*

YA: *The vivid depiction of the heightened emotions during the summer after high school make this an easy teen crossover. HB.*

Better the Blood.
By Michael Bennett. Read by Miriama McDowell and Richard Te Are.
2023. 9hr. Recorded Books, DD (9781705087664).

Where does the responsibility for the crimes of our ancestors lie? Bennett, an acclaimed filmmaker and Māori of Te Arawa descent, makes his crime fiction debut with an enthralling and relevant thriller that eschews facile characterizations and humanizes both hunter and hunted. Seasoned Māori actors McDowell and Are make a welcome pairing for this dual narration, journeying with detective Hana Westerman across Auckland as she tracks a killer intent on balancing the wrongs of history and colonization. McDowell channels Hana's strength and sensitivity as she navigates the pressures of duty and a commitment to justice. The tension finely tightens, and at times gives, as McDowell gauges Hana's passion and restraint. A defining assignment 18 years earlier placed her Māori identity in the cross-hairs, and she has since lived on the "tipping point"; if she leans too far, there will be no return. Te Are infuses his chapters with a gentle, deep gravitas that complements and counterpoints. His measured pacing mirrors the antagonist's thoughtful and methodical actions, heightening the arresting prose; listeners may find themselves holding their breath. McDowell and Are move fluidly between New Zealand English and te reo Māori, enhancing the aural experience with realism and respect for cultural specificity. For fans of mysteries rooted in place and history, including Attica Locke, Grace D. Li, Ausma Zehanat Khan, and David Heska Wanbli Weiden. —*María del Carmen Cifuentes*

A Flaw in the Design.
By Nathan Oates. Read by David Pittu.
2023. 10hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593677339).

When Gil's sister and brother in-law are tragically killed in a suspicious accident, their 17-year-old nephew Matthew comes to live with Gil and his family. Matthew was a troubled child who caused a family estrangement. Upon Matthew's arrival, Gil is confronted with deciding whether Matthew has changed or is a just as dangerous but more manipulative version of his old self. The story is written in a literary prose style that delves into Gil's internal dialogue. David Pittu is a perfect match for Gil and he artfully envelops the listener in Gil's internal conflict by manipulating pace and tone. Pittu also masters the complex teenage Matthew. The listener can hear the bored Matthew roll his eyes and sense the dramatic mood change when Matthew reveals his true self to Gil in an NYC alley. This suspenseful debut is a must-add to the to-be-read pile for psychological thriller fans of Mary Kubica, Riley Sager, and Alice Feeney. —*Lesley Cyrier*

How I'll Kill You.
By Ren DeStefano. Read by Karissa Vacker.
2023. 10hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593675243).

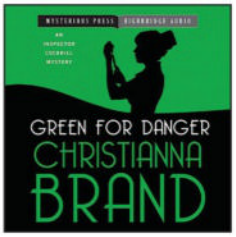
Sissy, Iris, and Moody are identical triplets, abandoned as infants and raised in group homes and foster care. As retaliation for being jilted by men as teenagers, they have become serial killers; Iris and Moody commit the murders, while Sissy handles the cleanup. Now it's Sissy's turn to commit the murder, but when

Classics Corner

Classics Corner highlights new recordings of classic titles.

Green for Danger.
By Christianna Brand. Read by Derek Perkins.
2023. 7hr. HighBridge, DD (9781696611435).

In a classic Golden Age novel set during WWII, narrator Perkins brings to life the Columbo-like character of Inspector Cockrill (played by Alastair Sim in the 1946 film adaptation) as he seeks to unravel the mysterious deaths at a British hospital. The suspicious deaths of a patient injured as a casualty of war, as well as an innocent hospital nurse, cause suspicions to fall on the six individuals most closely involved on the scene of the dastardly crimes. As the inspector conducts his interviews, intrigue surrounding a pair of past deaths narrows the center of attention. The lilting brogue of the storyteller quickly sets the tone for this eclectic tale. However, readers may find it challenging to follow the detective's process without paying close attention to the details as each suspect's alibi is assessed. A surprise ending will leave the listener wondering how they may have missed the clues throughout this suspenseful crime thriller first published in 1944. —*Ardith Eyring*



Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers on Audio

Historical settings and connections to true-crime podcasts are notable trends among these top 10 mystery and thriller audiobooks, reviewed in *Booklist* from May 1, 2022, to April 1, 2023. —*Heather Booth*

All the Dangerous Things. By Stacy Willingham. Read by Karissa Vacker. 2023. 10hrs. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250880871).

In an attempt to find her missing son, Isabelle connects with a true-crime podcaster, but all is not as it seems. Vacker does a remarkable job keeping the tension high.

Babysitter. By Joyce Carol Oates. Read by a full cast. 2022. 17.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593627891).

In mid-1970s Detroit, a serial killer who preys on children sets off a dark and devastating chain of events. Cassandra Campbell voices main character Hannah in quiet, whispery tones.

The Cage. By Bonnie Kistler. Read by Piper Goodeve and Chris Andrew Ciulla. 2022. 10.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063089198).

Two women step into an elevator; one emerges alive. Goodeve and Ciulla offer dual narration for this modern-day locked-room thriller. Production techniques elevate the audio value and impact.

City on Fire. By Don Winslow. Read by Ari Fliakos. 2022. 9hrs. HarperAudio, DD (9780062851222).

Loud, brazen, Irish accents dominate the narration and immerse the listener in the mobster world of 1980s Providence, Rhode Island. Fliakos' pace and tone match the story's epic drama and increasing urgency and tension.

The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. By Eva Jurczyk. Read by Hannah Cabell. 2022. 9.5hr. Recorded Books, CD (9781705030752).

When her library's most significant acquisition goes missing, Liesl is thrust into a multilayered whodunit. Cabell imbues her with impressive range, effortlessly adapting to the different ways Liesl interacts with people around her.

I Have Some Questions for You. By Rebecca Makkai. Read by Julia Whelan and JD Jackson. 2023. 14hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593670699).

A return to her New Hampshire school awakens in Bodie memories of her murdered roommate. Whelan is once again in top form and a deep-toned JD Jackson adds significant elements for the podcast portions of the book.

Jackal. By Erin E. Adams. Read by Sandra Okuboyejo and William DeMeritt. 2022. 10.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593614389).

Liz's goddaughter goes missing, drawing Liz back home and into the nightmare of multigenerational racist erasure. Chameleonic Okuboyejo never disappoints, elevating Adams' savvy thriller.

Marple: Twelve New Mysteries. By Agatha Christie and others. Read by a full cast. 2022. 11.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063136083).

She's back and as cunning as ever thanks to 12 top mystery authors and exceptional narrations. Each has his or her own take on Miss Marple's voice, but all are surprisingly fitting.

The Villa. By Rachel Hawkins. Read by a full cast. 2023. 8hrs. Macmillan Audio, CD, $31.04 (9781250878984).

Two women retreat to an Italian villa where a rock star was murdered and a landmark horror novel was written. Julia Whelan narrates the dual time lines as if she were two distinct narrators. Additional narrators step in to read from the horror novel, news articles, and podcast excerpts.

The Violin Conspiracy. By Brendan Slocumb. Read by JD Jackson and the author. 2022. 12.5hrs. Books on Tape, DD, $76 (9780593554975).

Ray, a Black violinist, discovers that his beloved fiddle is being held for an insurmountable ransom. Jackson nimbly inhabits characters across age and gender, time periods, and geography.

she falls in love with her mark, she needs to decide whether to remain loyal to her sisters or create a new life with Edison. The story is told from Sissy's first-person perspective, and narrator Karissa Vacker, even with her melodious voice, manages to portray the weight of Sissy's decisions and actions. Iris and Moody are voiced similarly to Sissy, as expected from triplets, but with slightly different inflections and tones to make them easier to distinguish. While listeners may think they know how this story will end, many will be pleasantly surprised by the unexpected finale. Share this book with readers who like sympathetic criminals. —*Suzanne Temple*

On the Savage Side.

By Tiffany McDaniel. Read by Catherine Taber.

2023. 16.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593669655).

In Chillicothe, Ohio of 1979, Arcade (Arc) believes that there is a savage side and a beautiful side. McDaniel paints a clear picture of the savage side, using Arc as her eccentric narrator. Arc and her twin Daffy do not lead a privileged life. Their father died of an overdose, their mother and aunt are addicts, and the only person to help raise them dies tragically not long into the story. Left to fend for themselves, they delve into the only life they know, one of sex and drugs. They have a close-knit set of friends that call themselves the Queens of Chillicothe and we learn of their struggles to survive sexual abuse, drug addiction, vulnerability, and violence. One by one, the Queens of Chillicothe are found dead, floating in the river, and while there are several credible suspects, no one knows who the killer is. Taber gives each character their own voice and captures the nature of the character within. With achingly young voices, Daffy and Arc survive their dark upbringing, transitioning to young women struggling to stay alive. Tabor expresses the tangled thoughts of an addict with conviction and reality. Rife with strong emotions, Tabor delivers this survival story expertly and persuasively, keeping listeners on the edge of their seats. —*Emily Borsa*

The Only Survivors.

By Megan Miranda. Read by a full cast.

Apr. 2023. 10hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797153513).

Every year, Cassidy Bent and a group of former classmates gather for a week in the Outer Banks to mark the anniversary of the tragic accident they all endured together. On the tenth anniversary, the remaining survivors assemble and begin to realize the question of "Who do you save?" may have finally caught up with them. The current-day story is told by Cassidy, with flashbacks to the day of the accident told by all the survivors. The story is read by a full cast, which is the perfect choice for distinguishing between the unique perspectives and fully immersing the listener. When the narra-

Continued on p.62

Listen-alikes

International Crime Fiction

by Maria del Carmen Cifuentes

Crime fiction audiobooks by authors with roots beyond our borders are bountiful, with Juan Gómez-Jurado's *Red Queen* as a prime example. Across the mystery genre, first-rate narration offers an immersive and often eye-opening way to experience suspense, thrills, as well as new takes on international society.

Argentina

Repentance. By Eloísa Díaz. Read by Richard Burnip. 2022. 9hr. Orange Sky Audio.

Burnip strikes the perfect tone for this dual–time line noir of murder and disappearance in Buenos Aires during the 2001 economic collapse and 1981 military dictatorship.

England

Take It Back. By Kia Abdullah. Read by a full cast. 2020. 11.5hr. Macmillan Audio.

A poignant legal thriller that looks hard at contemporary London, intensified by an arresting, diverse, multi-cast performance.

Ghana

The Missing American. By Kwei Quartey. Read by Robin Miles. 2020. 13hr. Recorded Books.

The dangers of internet scams and police corruption in Accra are heightened as acclaimed narrator Miles nimbly crafts realistic vocal characterizations and distinguishing accents.

India

The Bangalore Detectives Club. By Harini Nagendra. Read by Soneela Nankani. 2022. 9hr. Blackstone.

Independent, intelligent, newlywed Kaveri turns novice detective in this historical cozy set in 1920s Bangalore. Nankani delights, irradiating charm and nuance in this 2023 Audie Award finalist.

New Zealand

Better the Blood. By Michael Bennett. Read by Miriama McDowell and Richard Te Are. 2023. 9hr. Recorded Books.

An engaging, sensitive narration humanizes detective and killer as a Māori Auckland investigator pursues a murderer intent on balancing the wrongs of history and colonization.

Nigeria

Lightseekers. By Femi Kayode. Read by Cary Hite. 2021. 11.5hr. Hachette Audio.

Hite convincingly conveys the horrific mob killing of three university students in southern Nigeria. A gripping debut.

South Africa

The Lazarus Effect. By H. J. Golakai. Read by Moshidi Motshegwa. 2020. 10hr. Recorded Books.

A master of accents, Motshegwa channels the rich diversity of Cape Town in this absorbing tale of murder and family secrets.

South Korea

Lemon. By Kwon Yeo-sun. Translated by Janet Hong. Read by a full cast. 2021. 3hr. Recorded Books.

Korean and Korean-descent actors capture the subtleties of grief, the elusiveness of memory, and breaking of societal pressures in the aftermath of an unsolved murder 17 years earlier in Seoul.

Spain

The Silence of the White City. By Eva García Sáenz. Translated by Nick Caistor. Read by Henry Levya. 2020. 16hr. Books on Tape.

Ritualistic murders haunt Vitoria during the city festivals. Levya's Spanish fluency enhances the authenticity of this thriller steeped in Basque history and traditions.

Sweden

Blaze Me a Sun. By Christoffer Carlsson. Translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles. Read by Peter Noble. 2023. 14hr. Books on Tape.

The obsession for truth takes hold as a rural Swedish community struggles to cope with murders and a changing country over three decades in this slow-burn thriller.

Red Queen.
By Juan Gómez-Jurado. Read by Scott Brick.
2023. 13.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250881946).

Extraordinary Antonia Scott, who reserves three minutes a day to contemplate ending it all (she doesn't), and Jon Gutiérrez, a Bilbao cop busted for evidence tampering (you know, hearts and good places), are the off-beat duo on the covert, non-stop, pulse-racing trail of a murderous kidnapper. Prolific Spanish author Gómez-Jurado's international best-seller (*Reina Roja,* 2018) broke sales records in Spain and is coming to the screen late in 2023. This propulsive thriller, which breathes Madrid, is an all-encompassing symphony with Brick, as conductor, injecting doses of humor. His pronunciation of names and places is solid, and, despite the immediacy of the locale, Brick doesn't aim to intone Spanish accents. It's not needed. He keeps true to the core: the Antonia-Jon relationship that is axis and motor. Antonia's matter-of-fact manner is at times abrupt, distancing guilt and loss. Jon's warmth filters through sarcasm and incredulity. Brick's voice turns ominous, even urgent, for kidnapee Carla. With a fine-tuned sense for suspense, Brick invokes a cinematic atmosphere, keeping the listener from pressing pause. An entertaining conversation between narrator and novelist, each sharing their creative process, closes the audio. Until book two of the trilogy is translated, fans can further explore Iberian suspense with Dolores Redondo's *The Invisible Guardian* (2016) and Eva García Sáenz's *The Silence of the White City* (2020). —*María del Carmen Cifuentes*

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tor changes, it is clearly announced, making this format easy to follow in audio without the written text. Alex Allwine embodies Cassidy artfully, using pace to indicate Cassidy's growing fear, paranoia, and at the end, resolve. Fans of this format trend—thrillers with multiple perspectives read by a full cast, present in works such as Lucy Foley's *The Guest List* and Rachel Hawkins' *The Villa*—will be excited by Megan Miranda's latest. —*Lesley Cyrier*

The Soulmate.

By Sally Hepworth. Read by Barrie Kreinik and Jessica Douglas-Henry.

Apr. 2023. 7.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250878328).

A pair of excellent narrators anchor bestselling Australian author Hepworth's latest thriller about a couple whose seaside paradise is anything but. Gabe and Pippa Gerard live in a cliffside cottage outside Melbourne that boasts breathtaking views—and no shortage of would-be jumpers ready to end their lives. Luckily, smooth talker Gabe has been able to save all but one. When it's revealed that the jumper, Amanda Cameron, knew Gabe, questions surface regarding the circumstances of Amanda's death and the nature of the pair's relationship. In short alternating chapters, Barrie Kreinik as Pippa and Jessica Douglas-Henry as Amanda narrate the events before and after Amanda's demise. Kreinik's calm cadence belies Pippa's mounting panic as she questions whether she really knows her husband, while Douglas-Henry exudes a world-weary omniscience in Amanda's post-death chapters. The pair keep the tension mounting with measured narration as secrets are revealed and the plot slowly builds to its twisty conclusion. Hepworth's many fans will find much to enjoy here. —*Kaitlin Conner*

Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers.

By Jesse Q. Sutanto. Read by Eunice Wong.

2023. 10.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593675366).

Cozy mystery enthusiasts will find this Chinatown-set story a fun listening experience. Finding the dead body of Marshall Chin on the floor of her San Francisco tea shop, Vera tries her hand at sleuthing to determine the killer's identity. A "CSI"-tainted understanding of crime solving makes her under-appreciated with the local police department as she continues to insist that the deceased man is the victim of murder. Wong's use of voices brings to life her list of possible suspects. A motley crew of suspicious individuals including a jilted spouse, a cheated artist, and a disillusioned brother cross the threshold of the failing Chinatown establishment. Through an unusual set of circumstances these strangers become friends, working together to restore the aging tea shop. In the process the friends also help to revive the lonely owner's spirit. Listeners will be drawn into the conundrum and find it difficult to pause this enjoyable tale. —*Ardith Eyring*

White Fox.

By Owen Matthews. Read by Mark Bramhall.

2023. 10hr. Books on Tape, DD (9781984891501).

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vasin is back! Matthews concludes the Black Sun trilogy with another gripping tale involving dire historical events. Vasin is now working in a penal colony in Siberia. It is 1963, and President Kennedy and has just been shot. What ensues is a fast-paced, tightly-woven story about what might have happened and who might have been behind Kennedy's assassination. The story is chock-full of Cold War-era characters who may or may not be trusted—exactly what you want in a political thriller. Narrator Bramhall is at home with this thriller and sounds as if he's served in the military all his life. As the tension amps up, he exudes conspiratorial tones and easily distinguishes the voices of the various characters. The many Russian words and names naturally flow in the narration. There is an afterword by the author that should not be missed. Fans of John le Carré, Joseph Kanon, and this series will be pleased. —*Shellie Zeigler*

Youth

The Jump.

By Brittney Morris. Read by a full cast.

2023. 7.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797152035). Gr. 7–10.

This high-octane, high-intensity novel crackles with the energy of wholly justified adolescent outrage at a world where the deck is stacked against some and the game is rigged. With puzzle master Jax leading, parkourist Yas, Spider the hacker extraordinaire, and Han, who knows his way around every tunnel, nook, and cranny in Seattle, make up team Jericho: some of the savviest scavenger hunters in Washington. They spend their time following clues and cracking codes for relatively low-stakes games until one day a cloaked vigilante group presents an unsanctioned challenge. The winner will walk away with something they all need: power. The stakes have never been higher as clues are exposed. Will their friendship survive? Will *they*? Zeno Robinson, Soneela Nankani, Sagan Chen, and Ali Andre Ali (Jax, Yas, Spider, and Han, respectively) move the story from their own perspectives in alternating chapters. Robinson and Chen, especially, put listeners into the shoes of their characters: in high school, competing with (and sometimes against) friends for what might just be survival. Perfect for teen readers with their eyes wide open who like their stakes high and their puzzles thrilling. —*Caitlin Savage*

Leila & Nugget Mystery: The Case with No Clues.

By Dustin Brady. Read by Emily Eiden.

2023. 1.5hr. Andrews McMeel, DD (9781524885861). Gr. 1–3.

This second installment in the *Leila & Nugget* series stars Leila, a budding sleuth who learns about an unsolved treasure hunt that happened at her school in 1947. Soon she becomes obsessed with figuring out a bunch of playful clues. Sounding jubilant and youthful, narrator Eiden gives this fast-paced tale a fun, bouncy energy, especially during the zippy exchanges between Leila and her money-obsessed pal Kate. Eiden plays the elderly characters, including a retired librarian and Leila's lovable neighbor, with a convincing waver in her voice, perfect for a rather old-fashioned story not afraid to throw in a "Grandma joke" (such as "What is black and white and red all over?") or two. She gives a crusty gym teacher a raspy voice that sounds menacing, but amusingly so. When Kate puts the teacher back in place, reminding him of his overdue library book, the listener cannot help but laugh. Ultimately this lighthearted account celebrates community and a love for reading, with lessons learned and mysteries pleasantly solved. —*Brian Wilson*

She Is a Haunting.

By Trang Thanh Tran. Read by Emi Ray.

2023. 9.5hr. Bloomsbury, DD (9781547610839). Gr. 9–12.

Tran and Ray, both Vietnamese American, make their respective debuts as author and narrator with mixed results. Seventeen-year-old Jade has gotten into UPenn, but she knows her single mother can't afford her tuition: "That leaves Ba," who abandoned the family in Philadelphia four years ago, returning to Đà Lat, Vietnam, where he's restoring a 1920 villa into a luxury bed-and-breakfast. To get his support, Jade agrees to spend five weeks at Ba's Nhà Hoa: Flower House. At least Jade has trusting younger sister Lily with her to buffer her acrimonious father/daughter (non)relationship. She's also tasked with building the property's website with Ba's business partner's niece (who's definitely more interesting than the work). The house is less than welcoming, haunted with wretched colonial history and undead spirits exposing misery and abuse. Despite the high drama, Ray's performance is just efficient. What could have been a hair-raising Gothic horror meanders, ultimately losing its fearful edge. —*Terry Hong*

The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels.

By Beth Lincoln. Read by Nikki Patel.

2023. 10hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593663400). Gr. 5–7.

Shenanigan Swift has questions—not the least of which concern the whereabouts of a long-lost family treasure—and she's not afraid to get to the bottom of them. Some might call her a rascal and a mischief-maker; after all, the Swifts name their children from the dictionary and their names inform their characters. But Shenanigan prefers to think of herself as a "doing things person." This is a good thing when, in the midst of the Swift family reunion, Arch-Aunt Schadenfreude ends up at the bottom of the stairs, and nobody knows who's responsible. As the investigation gains momentum, so does the body count. The quirky cast of characters quickly reveals that nothing and no one is quite as they seem, and though their names may help define them (pun intended), words

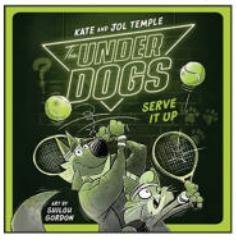
have many meanings. Nikki Patel delightfully unravels the story as though she's a big-eyed Victorian moppet. Though the pacing is a bit slow at times, Patel's voice overall is an excellent vehicle for this delectable mystery. The Swifts are certain to captivate both lexophiles and those who simply love a clever twist and turn. —*Caitlin Savage*

Three Drops of Blood.
By Gretchen McNeil. Read by Natalie Duke.
2023. 10hr. Disney, DD (9781368095877). Gr. 9–12.

Kate, a plus-size teen actress, is out of work and looking for a way to jump-start her acting career. She takes an office job to support herself but then witnesses a double murder in the office across the way. Kate has trouble trying to convince anyone of what she saw. As the mystery deepens, she doubts anyone will believe her before she herself becomes the next victim. Narrator Natalie Duke perfectly matches the pace and tone of the characters through the twists and turns of teenage love and drama. Duke's performance adds charm in all the right places and tension that builds through the multiple twists of this mystery. The pacing captures the essence of Kate, and the stresses she encounters because of her decisions, and shows us the depth of Kate's character. For fans of the *Good Girl's Guide to Murder* series. —*Sharon Haupt*

The Underdogs Serve it Up.
By Kate Temple and Jol Temple. Read by Alexandra Ryan.
2023. 1hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593665398). K–Gr. 4.

Who you gonna call when the Dogtown Grand Slam is about to start but someone has stolen all of the tennis balls? The Underdogs, of course! The motley crew of dog detectives (plus a cat) is on the case so that Steffie Gruff can get the game going. This third in the series about the second-best dog detective agency in town is full of energy and keeps the mystery rolling along in a hybrid chapter-book format. The audio solidly stands on its own with audio production effects, music befitting an action-adventure movie, and background sound effects to set the scenes. Ryan crafts distinct voices for each pooch including a range of comical accents for the tennis personalities, several of whom will remind grownups of international tennis stars. Many words in print are emphasized with boldface, and Ryan really leans into these, and though sound effects abound, she is sure to read every word on the page including all the onomatopoeia. Both these techniques will aid youngsters who are following along in the print. This terrifically entertaining audio adaptation will engage young listeners. The title includes a PDF so audio readers don't miss out on the skill-building puzzles at the book's conclusion. —*Heather Booth*



Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers for Youth on Audio

Great narration can add a suspenseful element, and keen mystery listeners might even hear a few clever clues. These titles for youth are audiobook standouts in recent years. —*Heather Booth*

Drew Leclair Gets a Clue. By Katryn Bury. Read by Devon Hales. 2022. 6.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780358669357). Gr. 5–8.

Drew, a true-crime fan, encounters her own mystery when an online bully takes over her middle school. Hales gives Drew a snarky, gumshoe voice.

Firekeeper's Daughter. By Angeline Boulley. Read by Isabella Star LaBlanc. 2021. 14hrs. Macmillan Audio, CD (9781250779519). Gr. 10–12.

Caught between her Ojibwe tribe and her desire to help the FBI, Daunis is faced with difficult choices when she witnesses a murder. LaBlanc's reading is sensitive and tension-filled.

Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone. By Tae Keller. Read by a full cast. 2022. 7hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593559987). Gr. 4–7.

After Jennifer goes missing, her notebook becomes a key to her disappearance. A full cast helps differentiate "now" and "then" in this sincere and emotional middle-grade tale.

Live, Laugh, Kidnap. By Gabby Noone. Read by Brittany Pressley. 2022. 9hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593508008). Gr. 9–12.

A local megachurch, a post-hippie commune, and a small town clash, uniting three teens in a caper involving a little kidnapping and a lot of humor. Pressley adds a lively layer.

Pride and Premeditation. By Tirzah Price. Read by Morag Sims. 2021. 8.5hr. HarperAudio, DD, $23.99 (9780063061477). Gr. 9–12.

This revisionist take on Lizzie Bennet finds our heroine in a London murder mystery! Sims nails the witty banter and sharp humor for this series-starter.

Stuntboy, in the Meantime. By Jason Reynolds. Read by a full cast. 2021. 2.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797111797). Gr. 3–5.

Portico's alter-ego, Stuntboy, keeps the residents of his building safe as he faces big changes in his own life. A vibrant full cast, sound effects, and music transition this hybrid-novel to audio with panache.

Team Chu and the Battle of Blackwood Arena. By Julie C. Dao. Read by Angela Tran and Richard Nguyen. 2022. 6.5hr. Orange Sky Audio, DD (9781667070155). Gr. 3–6.

A brother and sister must band together to rescue a laser-tag player who claims to be trapped. Narrators Tran and Nguyen keep the suspense high for this middle-grade action-suspense story.

The Underdogs Serve It Up. By Kate Temple and Jol Temple. Read by Alexandra Ryan. 2023. 1hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593665381). Gr. K–4.

All of the energy, humor, and suspense of the hybrid chapter-book about dog detectives is here on audio. Accents, sound effects, and dramatic music make this case of missing tennis balls a grand slam.

What Happened to Rachel Riley? By Claire Swinarski. Read by a full cast. 2023. 6hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063213128). Gr. 5–8.

This podcast-framed middle-grade mystery about bullying and sexual harassment shows tremendous care translating a multiformat novel to audio.

Wretched Waterpark. By Kiersten White. Read by Keylor Leigh. 2022. 4.5hrs. Listening Library, DD (9780593559925). Gr. 3–6.

A droll series-starter, read with a perfect balance of foreboding and deadpan humor, finds the Sinister-Winterbottom siblings solving mysteries at creepy vacation spots.

Booklist Backlist

No Ordinary Mom Stories

By Annie Bostrom

Moms! We know moms; we have moms; we are moms. To quote Connie Wang, author of *Oh My Mother!*, "to write about your mom, especially if it's your job to write, is to reveal that you have nothing much to write about in the first place." Her point is that the subject couldn't be more mundane, but we know the truth: there's no limit to the shapes a mom story can take, the directions it can go, the out-of-nowhere weeping it can cause. And there are certainly infinite ways to read mom stories. Featuring extraordinary moms (and one grandma!) who are also funny, quotable, superhuman, super-capable, and even "mean and crazy," these novels and nonfiction works are our most memorable mom stories from the last few years.

Fiction

Confessions of a Domestic Failure. By Bunmi Laditan. 2017. Harlequin.

Feeling lonely and like a failure, stay-at-home mom Ashley undergoes a popular blogger's better-mommy boot camp in Laditan's laugh-out-loud and realistic novel.

The Hero of This Book. By Elizabeth McCracken. 2022. Ecco.

Navigating a literary tightrope stretched between fiction and memoir, McCracken sends her unnamed narrator to London, where she remembers—and comes to new realizations about—her mother.

Nightbitch. By Rachel Yoder. 2021. Knopf.

When "the mother," a bored and despairing human mom to a toddler, begins turning into a dog at night, things click into place as Yoder's cathartic novel pushes reality to its fantastic limits.

The Vanishing Half. By Brit Bennett. 2020. Riverhead.

Estranged twin sisters become mothers of very different means and circumstances in this intergenerational epic of race and inheritance.

Varina Palladino's Jersey Italian Love Story. By Terri-Lynne DeFino. 2023. Morrow.

DeFino's tale of a widow sandwiched between her adult millennial kids and nonagenarian mother is a zesty homage to the northern New Jersey microcosm that delights with its universality and specificity.

Nonfiction

Dear Girls: Intimate Tales, Untold Secrets & Advice for Living Your Best Life. By Ali Wong. 2019. Random.

Formatted as a series of letters to her (toddler) daughters, Wong's genuine LOLs and intimate truths add up to a multidimensional self-portrait of the famous, funny mom.

Easy Beauty. By Chloé Cooper Jones. 2022. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader.

After a lifetime of hearing motherhood was a not an option for a body deemed disabled, Jones welcomed her son, Wolfgang. Motherhood is just one of the themes prompting her soul-stretching, breathtaking, existential memoir.

Films of Endearment: A Mother, a Son, and the '80s Films That Defined Us. By Michael Koresky. 2021. Hanover Square.

Film critic Koresky and his mom, Leslie, decided to rewatch the movies she showed him as a kid, leading to new discussions and this warm, engaging mother-son story.

Oh My Mother! A Memoir in Nine Adventures. By Connie Wang. 2023. Viking.

Wang calls this collection of travel essays her and her mother's shared memoir, which chronicles mother and daughter taking U.S. road trips, lounging at tropical resorts, visiting family in China, and seeing *Magic Mike Live* in Vegas.

The Ugly Cry. By Danielle Henderson. 2021. Viking.

Henderson's hilariously no-nonsense grandma, who she once thought was "the meanest, craziest person I ever met," is the fiercely loving heart and undisputed star of this memoir.

You Got Anything Stronger? Stories. By Gabrielle Union. 2021. Morrow/Dey St.

Always smart, inviting, and generous with emotion, Union presents a second book of essays that touches on experiencing infertility, becoming a mom through surrogacy, and step-parenting. And a dance battle with Bruno Mars.

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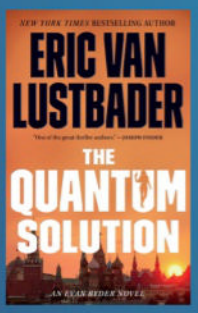
A non-stop, gripping thriller from "a bright new star in crime fiction." **(JAMES PATTERSON)**

5.9.23

9781250839138



Evan Ryder is back and in deadly peril in the fourth heart-stopping installment of this enthralling series.

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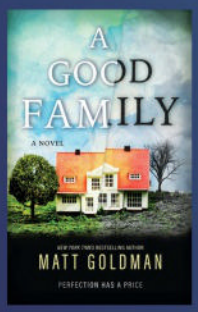

A gripping, emotional thrill ride about the secrets hidden underneath a picture-perfect neighborhood.

5.30.23

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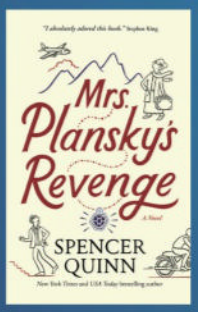


"I absolutely adored this book. Mrs. Plansky is a terrific character. The story ticks along like a good watch."
–STEPHEN KING

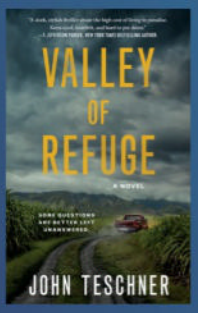
7.25.23

9781250854568

A near-future thriller where John Matherson must contend with new threats to the fragile civilization that he helped rebuild.

8.22.23

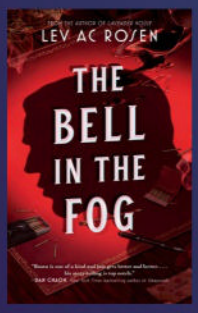
9781250827357



A Hawaiian family must decide the future of their ancestral land when a tech billionaire decides he wants it for himself and won't take no for an answer.

10.3.23

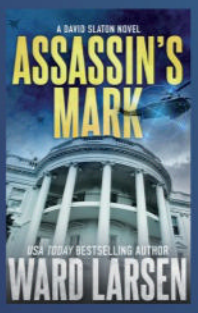
9781250834256



Brand-new queer, historical mystery that follows an ex-cop turned private detective on a new case set in San Francisco, 1952.

10.10.23

9781250798237



A new, fast-paced thriller where CIA operative David Slaton must topple a conspiracy in the uppermost echelons of Washington.

11.28.23

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